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by Theodore M. Greene

THE NECESSITY FOR SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

I must serve notice at the outset that what I have to say will not make pleasant reading. It will be thought by some to be pessimistic, by others, negative and unconstructive, and by still others, utopian. It is intentionally iconoclastic, for I am convinced that we must give up many of our favorite beliefs regarding the humanities if we are to help revive them.

What is commonly meant by the "humanities?" Such meaning as the term still has today derives from current academic usage. According to this usage, it signifies the study of certain subjects appearing in a "liberal arts" curriculum. The only subject invariably included is modern literature, English and European; Greek and Latin are of course also included wherever they are still taught, and the fine arts wherever they have been added to the course of study; history and philosophy are sometimes listed as humanities, sometimes not, for a variety of conflicting reasons. When religion is taught at all it is usually classified as one of the humanities. Mathematics, the natural sciences, and the social sciences are consistently excluded; whatever their nature and value, they are, by common consent, *not* humanistic.

If a rationale is sought for this curious state of affairs no clear answer is forthcoming. What makes a subject a "humanity?" It cannot be defined as a subject the study of which interests man, satisfies his curiosity, stirs his imagination, or helps him to relate himself to the universe or to his fellow men, for the so-called non-humanistic subjects all satisfy these requirements to a greater or less degree. It cannot be defined as the study of man himself, because the natural sciences tell us much about man as a psycho-physical organism, and the social sciences about men in their social, economic, and political relation to one another. It

cannot even be defined as the study of man as a judging animal, as a being capable of creating and enjoying beauty, striving for goodness, and searching after Deity, for the social sciences also study man as a being concerned with aesthetic, moral, and religious values. One is tempted to conclude, from a survey of academic practice, that the one *distinctive* characteristic of the "humanities" is a concern with "art," with literature as an art and with the "fine arts." But when we examine the way in which these "arts" are commonly taught and commonly studied by humanistic scholars we find again and again that the artistic quality of these works of art is largely ignored, and that the teacher's and scholar's chief or exclusive interest is historical, or linguistic, or ideological—in the work's authenticity; its historical setting, sources, and influences; its formal structure and the ideas it expresses. The term "humanities," in short, has lost all significant meaning in the academic world; it functions today merely as a, supposedly convenient, actually highly unrealistic and inconvenient, category for administrative classification and procedure. I shall want to qualify these sweeping generalizations before I am done, but they are true enough to indicate the initial problem of all friends of the humanities.

Before considering, therefore, *how* the humanities can be re-vitalized we had better ask, *What* do we want to re-vitalize, and why? To these questions no satisfactory answer will be found by a mere reshuffling of subjects, courses, or fields in an academic curriculum. Tinkering with the curriculum can do no earthly good so long as those who are doing the tinkering, and the teaching and scholarly research, lack an intelligible philosophy of education. Such a philosophy of education, however, would be a philosophy of man—that is, a clear conception of what man is and what he might become, of his relation to his total environment, of his past, his present, and his possible or probable future. How can any decision be made as to what is and what is not worth teaching and studying if no clear answer is available, even in the form of a working hypothesis, to such basic questions as these?

What I am suggesting is that the best way to "revive the humanities" is to stop worrying about them for a while as separate disciplines—certainly to stop apologizing for them, or defending them—and to start some very hard thinking about human nature and the real world in which man finds himself. Strenuous thought along these lines may eventually bring us back to what really is worth reviving in the humanities; without such thought and heart-searching we will merely continue to fumble and eulogize, condemn, or ignore meaningless abstractions.

This suggestion, however, brings us to a second difficulty, or nest of difficulties, far more basic than mere academic confusion. For these other confusions reflect a social temper which is, or at least which has been until very recently, completely hostile to any such fundamental inquiry. I can mention here only two related characteristics of this temper: first, our passion for the "practical" and our corresponding contempt for "speculation;" and second, our short-range hedonism and our profound disinclination to concern ourselves seriously with questions vital to human life.

Our zest for the immediately "practical" and our distrust of all thoughtful study, save insofar as it gives promise of yielding quick "practical" results, have expressed themselves in innumerable ways—in our respect for business efficiency and admiration for the "successful" business man, our subordination of political to economic interests, our suspicion of all attempts at long-range political planning, our predominant interest in the practical results of applied science, our ever increasing emphasis on vocational training at the expense of liberal education, and now, during the war, our waxing pride in our industrial and military efficiency and our failure, as a nation, to give much thought to what we are fighting for or to the inescapable conditions of "a just and durable peace."

This passion for the "practical," in turn, is closely related to our national scale of values, which is still best described in terms of relatively immediate security, prosperity, and comfort. We have not of late seriously concerned ourselves, as a nation, with the

basic values which give meaning and purpose to life. Witness the spiritual apathy of most church-going or professing Christians, and the common belief, among the non-religious, that no hope for a spiritual revival is to be sought in the churches. Witness our common indifference to social injustice and racial discrimination. Witness the scale of value implicit in our popular and semi-popular art—in the movies and radio programs, magazines and books, and most eloquently, in our commercial advertisements.

This evil temper has reflected itself in our schools and colleges among students and faculty alike. Our younger students come to us from families in which they have acquired little self-discipline and little encouragement to consider seriously matters that are really serious for human living. They leave school largely illiterate and inarticulate, and many of them, though certainly not all, remain untouched by the great ideas and achievements that have inspired and motivated human progress, and acquire little genuine social consciousness and small respect for first-rate intellectual and spiritual integrity. This is partly, at least, because most of their teachers have long since given up the attempt to arrive at any communal agreement as to what it is that really constitutes a valuable education. On all basic questions concerning human nature, freedom and responsibility, religious belief and social service, discovery and creation, our school and university faculties are hopelessly at odds. They can always agree on such broad generalizations as that education (left undefined) and truth (in general) are a Good Thing. But the minute more specific questions are raised—as to whether, for example, some subjects may be more important to man than other subjects, some truths than other truths—the only way to keep the peace is to indulge in a series of superficial adjustments within the framework of the academic status quo. Scholars and teachers are today quite unable to agree on any intelligible scale of values; indeed, they cannot even agree that it is important to attempt to discover such a scale. A radical reexamination of fundamentals seems to most of them to be “theoretical,” “impractical,” and therefore futile.

This, I submit, is not an atmosphere, social or academic, favor-

able to the only type of inquiry which can possibly lead to a revival of what the humanities have stood for in the past and of whatever in them is worthy of revival today. There is, indeed, a growing sense that what is human and humane is somehow important and worthy of defense. *People keep hoping that a champion of human dignity and human value will appear.* Some still have faith that the church will prove to be this champion; some, the school; and many, though by no means all, the state. A sober realism will hardly justify these hopes or expectations, for no one of these institutions, *as a social institution*, is today unified, thoughtful or impassioned enough to redeem us from our social lethargy and blindness. Confidence that liberal education in general, and the humanities in particular, will somehow be able to save us from ourselves in the eleventh hour is sheer utopianism, the counsel of despair.

Our only hope resides in the "saving remnant" in each of these institutions and in society at large. How have reforms ever been achieved? What is it that has quickened man's conscience in the past, encouraged bold inquiry, fired the imagination, instilled courage and hope? It has never been authoritative fiat, whether governmental, ecclesiastical, or academic. When the times were ripe for an authoritative formula it has occasionally been forthcoming, but it has been effective only in proportion as it crystallized what was already in men's hearts and minds. Similarly, mere institutional reorganization has never sufficed, for a new institutional structure can have significance only when it is called into being by a vital force for which the existing structure is palpably inadequate. Nor, finally, have the great reform movements in history had to wait for the unanimous or even the majority consent of all interested parties. What has, time and again, leavened the lump has been a small devoted co-operative group of people, often under an inspiring leader, whose faith did in fact move mountains, whose vision proved, at least for a time, to be illuminating and contagious, whose challenge to their contemporaries awakened a responsive note. The early Christian church, the

scholars and artists of the Italian Renaissance, the protestant reformers, our founding fathers, the communist revolutionaries, and the originators of Fascism and Naziism in the last decade—all illustrate the extraordinary power and range of gifted individuals and of small groups of people possessed by a new idea in which they had passionate faith.

Not all historic change, however, is a change for the better, as each reader will testify in making his own estimate of the illustrations just cited. These historic revolutions have only two things in common, their initiation by a small group and their historic timeliness. The genius of the architects and sculptors, tragedians, statesmen and philosophers and ancient Greece, and their allegiance to their several ideals, were certainly no less than the genius and devotion that inspired the Italian Renaissance, but the times were over-ripe—or perhaps the spirit animating their labors was not the spirit that was needed to save the city-states from their fate. Their achievements were, of course, not wasted on that account; their voices have echoed ever since, more loudly and clearly in some centuries than in others. So with the advent of modern science; the times had to be ripe for that transformation of outlook which was requisite to a study of nature in the spirit of modern empirical inquiry.

Though it is notoriously difficult to interpret one's own period in history, reflective commentary today upon current events is nearly unanimous that the whole world needs (and that we in this country especially need) a change of heart, wise leadership towards humane objectives, and the will to make human life worth human living. The times are ripe, perhaps as never before in history, for an illuminating, challenging, and reforming vision and belief. Where is such vision and such faith to come from?

Some students of history and human nature are convinced that the only power adequate to the task in hand is a spiritual power, and all sincere Christians believe that the Christian Gospel is now, as ever, man's only means of ultimate salvation. This belief need not be confused, as is common in secular circles, with a dogmatic faith that God will save mankind quite independently

of all human initiative and response, or that the church is an equally efficient vehicle for Divine Grace at all moments in history. There are, it is true, many Christians who subscribe to one or both of these beliefs; but there are other professing Christians, including the author of this essay, whose faith takes a different form. They believe that the Divine Power works in and through men, not on them like an external mechanical Force; that man is a free and responsible moral agent really able to accept or reject Divine aid; that without this aid man is unable, individually or corporately, to conquer the egoism and pride to which he is so fatally prone; but that with God's assistance he can accomplish those basic reforms which, at his best moments, he desires above all else. They believe, finally, that the Christian church is indeed divinely instituted for man's salvation, but that its efficiency is not magical but spiritual, and that the worshipper's humility and sincerity are essential conditions of his receiving or transmitting the "fruits of the spirit."

This central Christian belief is relevant to our theme because it asserts that men can achieve his full stature and be truly human *only* with Divine assistance, and that man's repeated attempts to achieve this goal entirely by his own efforts are utterly utopian and unrealistic. The question at issue is simply a question of fact. If the Christian humanists are right, or more nearly right than are anti-religious or un-religious humanists, the revival of a true humanism must await a religious, indeed, a Christian revival; if they are mistaken, as all sincere secularists believe they are, their faith in and reliance on a non-existent Deity is not only pathetic—it is dangerous, since any major error endangers human welfare and human progress. This issue is too crucial to be ignored as it is still being ignored by a vast majority of our population. Assent and dissent are both compatible with sincerity; indifference is intolerable.

What I would particularly urge on this occasion, however, is not the truth or reasonableness of the Christian doctrines of God, man, and salvation, but the imperative need today (assuming these doctrines to be true) for a spiritual revival within the

Christian church, and, more particularly, the manner in which such a revival might take place. The need for it is admitted today by all informed and honest Christians. But how is this need to be met? Not, I believe, by ecclesiastical pronouncements of ecclesiastical reorganization, though such action might be beneficial. Not by the clergy waiting for the laity to become more spiritually minded, or vice versa. In the church, as elsewhere, human nature is fatally prone to hold others responsible for a corporate failure, and to wait for others to take the lead. Christianity will become revitalized in our churches only in proportion as all sorts of individuals throughout the church realize their own individual Christian responsibilities and, in co-operation with like-minded fellow Christians, start to reform themselves with all the zeal, intelligence, and imagination at their disposal.

The same is true in the secular institutions of family, school and state. The most alarming social phenomenon today is individual irresponsibility. This is evident in the attitude of children towards each other and towards their parents, and of parents towards their children. Parents, for example, seem to be relying more and more on the school to provide their children with the manners and morals which they should learn at home. It is evident in the school: administrative officers blame the faculty for academic sins of omission, and the faculty blame their administrative officers, or each other, or their unprepared or undisciplined students, in turn, expect for the most part to "receive" an education, and then do all they can to shift their own academic responsibilities upon the shoulders of their teachers, textbooks, and tutors. In the social and political sphere we encounter the same disturbing phenomenon—the tendency of members of labor unions to let their union bosses order their lives and do their fighting for them, the tendency of employers to rely more and more on government and, simultaneously, to resent governmental measures. We see everywhere a growing tendency to await salvation from any quarter except right at home.

This long excursion brings us back to the theme of this essay. The problem of how to revive the humanities is but one part of the

larger problem of liberal education today, and of all education, and, finally, of our contemporary society. Some powerful reformer or reform movement may, for all we know, be just over the horizon; if so, the ultimate effect upon our society may be preponderantly good or ill. In any case, it is certainly utopian and futile to wait apathetically for any such historic event to take place. The only constructive alternative to apathy is action now, on a more modest scale, by many able men and women of good will wherever opportunity presents itself. This applies to education, and to the humanities, as it applies to the family, the church and all other social institutions.

This procedure recommends itself to us particularly today for two reasons; first, because it is so eminently appropriate to a free and democratic society; and second, because our society, whatever its over-all weaknesses, contains thousands of men and women able to undertake this task. It is in line with the democratic spirit which insists on the freedom *and responsibility* of the individual, and which is fundamentally opposed to even salvation when dictated from above. The weakness of liberalism has been its tendency to mistake license for freedom, laissez-faire for tolerance; its strength has been, and is, insistence that human responsibility for initiative belongs ultimately to the individual and the small like-minded group. The more sincerely we believe this, and the more resolutely we act on this belief, the more effectively will we be continuing and strengthening the best in our liberal democratic heritage.

And we have the power to accomplish this. For, though our basic institutions display all the generic weakness enumerated above, there are in each of them countless individuals who are today performing their tasks with intelligence, courage and imagination—wise parents, eager and industrious boys and girls, devout and intelligent clergy and laity, far-sighted and courageous citizens, thoughtful and inspiring teachers and scholars, even in the humanities. These people constitute the health and the hope of the institutions in which they are active and of our society. If they will but redouble their efforts with greater faith in the con-

tagious power of their example, there is no limit to what they can, among them, accomplish.

Consider, for example, the positive achievements of small groups of teachers and scholars in the field of liberal education. A few classicists really are aware of the distinctive value today of a classical training for American youth. They realize that this value is not primarily linguistic or antiquarian (as less alert classical scholars are prone to argue), for classical culture produced first-rate philosophy and first-rate literature and art, and consequently the historical study of this period is essential to a comprehension of our whole tradition and of contemporary western culture. A student majoring in a *well-balanced* department of classics is thus introduced to three major disciplines—Philosophy, Art, and History—in intimate organic relation, and to a rich evolving culture profoundly influential upon his own. No defense is needed for studies of such scope and depth, only a lucid explanation of their objectives and, above all, a type of teaching and scholarship exemplary of the classical spirit at its best.

Similarly, a few scientists are not only competent technicians but are sufficiently historically and philosophically minded to realize the generic character of scientific inquiry, the importance of its historical development, and its significance for modern man. Students fortunate enough to encounter such scientists as these are able to catch not only their enthusiasm for specialized research but also a just and humane appreciation of both the potentialities and the self-imposed limitations of scientific discovery. There are still a few philosophers in the great tradition of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, and Kant, who have not lapsed with narrow specialization and who endeavor to interpret human experience and known reality in our age as their predecessors did in theirs. And so in all the other major disciplines are those who see their subject in its relation to other subjects and who have, to a considerable extent, escaped academic provincialism and dogmatism. Such men and women,

and the young people who study under them, constitute the health, and the hope, of the liberal arts.

They, moreover, conducting coöperative experiments throughout the country, hold the greatest promise for the future. These experiments are far more genuinely creative, far more realistic in their meliorism, than are the various revolutionary and counter-revolutionary educational blue-prints, whether "progressive" or "neo-Thomist," which are acclaimed and anathematized today with loud publicity. I have in mind, as examples of healthy academic evolution, the intellectual ferment at Amherst under Meiklejohn, the coöperative freshman and sophomore course in Columbia developed under Dean Hawkes, the three years course in the humanities at Scripps, the three inter-departmental programs at Princeton, the honors program at Swarthmore, and, quite as significant, the quiet unheralded day by day work of many individuals and groups throughout the country. These experiments do not deserve the harsh verdict of educational innovators who are so confident of themselves that they would wipe the slate clean and start education *de novo*. They are being conducted in line with our American spirit at its best, in the attempt to capitalize upon the distinctive traditions of their several colleges or universities and to evolve, boldly and constructively, new ways of meeting new problems in an ever-changing social order.

Such experiments as these, if pursued energetically and reflectively enough, are our chief defense against academic stagnation, on the one hand, academic regimentation according to some *a priori* or archaic educational pattern, on the other. They are not yet nearly so numerous as they should be. They are not prosecuted so energetically as they should be. The reflection that has thus far gone into them is not yet so profound or searching as the situation demands. Faculty inertia, American "practicability," and administrative preoccupation with less important matters—all work to retard or stifle such evolutionary reforms. The academic lump is a hard lump to leaven. But such obstacles as these have been overcome before and can be overcome again, never completely, but progressively with more and more success.

Meliorism is less dramatic than absolutism or utopianism, but it is far more conserving and creative in the long run.

In this spirit, I am confident, those most concerned with the traditional humanities can progressively revitalize whatever is of continuing value in these ancient studies. For it will lead them to ask the right questions—the first prerequisite to any discovery, and, with the aid of these questions, to cut through academic conventions that have outlived their usefulness and get down to man's enduring needs as they reveal themselves in old and new ways. It will lead them to re-examine liberal education and its relation to our democratic objectives,¹ to see the value to man of all liberal studies, and, in this wider context, the distinctive contributions which the arts and literatures, religion, history and philosophy can make to human development and freedom. It will lead them to see that, though these studies are not the only ones which treat of man as a judging animal concerned with aesthetic, moral, and religious values, they alone—this is their peculiar merit—enable him to discover objective standards of judgment and to judge himself in the light of these standards. These studies (call them “humanities” or what you will) are indeed man's only safeguard against “reforms” which are, in fact, tragic retrogressions, against absolutisms and nihilistic relativisms, against utopian hope and cynical lethargy. They, more than any other academic studies, can give man that understanding of himself and of his profoundest insights and aspirations which can help him progressively to achieve human dignity and human freedom.

Finally, this spirit of adventurous inquiry will instill in all true lovers of wisdom and of mankind that humility which is prerequisite to illuminating intercourse. It will demand self-criticism and continual re-education. *It will make clear that no subject is so humane that it cannot be studied and taught inhumanely, no subject so inhuman that it cannot be studied and taught so as to enrich and deepen human life.* It will, in short, save the humanities

¹Cf. “Liberal Education Re-examined; Its Role in a Democracy” (Harpers, 1943).

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from their worst enemies, those self-styled "humanists" who have forgotten their true calling, and it will welcome to the ranks of genuine humanists all teachers and scholars who see life and their respective studies in the perspective of human value.

Belief in the possibility of such an American renaissance in education is not utopian, though it may be optimistic. It need not take place, and certainly will not take place inevitably; but it *can* take place if enough men and women, each in his own way—individually and collectively—believe ardently enough that it is possible. Education and scholarship, thus revitalized, cannot by themselves reform the evils of our society, but they can contribute mightily to their alleviation. Seldom has history set the stage in such dramatic fashion or forced upon men so sharp a choice between culture and anarchy, slavery and freedom. The eyes of the whole world are upon us. We dare not refuse the challenge of the times.

by George N. Shuster

MAN ON THE CAMPUS

SPINOZA, writing to Jelles, commented on a book which seemed to him the "most pernicious" he had ever read. "Money and honors constitute the highest good of the man who wrote it," he concluded; "he inwardly rejects all religion while professing such religion as will best serve to advance him." Spinoza's remarks are commonplaces of ethical thought. Socrates and Cicero, Juvenal and Ben Jonson would have been comparably forceful. The "most pernicious" book is unfortunately also a recurring phenomenon. In its most appalling modern version, it is called *Mein Kampf*.

Here is an issue which lends zest and point to the debate about the humanities. It can honestly be said in their behalf that teachers of the literatures and the philosophies have held the things of the spirit, of righteousness, of beauty and honor, in good repute. But we may legitimately wonder whether these teachers have not been woefully complacent about their loyalties—whether the reason why men have listened to other doctrines is not akin to that which keeps them from finding the *summum bonum* in a nightly game of bridge with the rector. Does not the pale cast of boredom too often becloud our concern with the hundred best books, in a world which invites men and women to make books of their own?

Far too frequently we have found vindication of our self-esteem in the theory that, whichever way the fretful midge of opinion might veer, the bright boy in the class would nevertheless some day write a "brilliant" dissertation on the syntax of Propertius. Or if his fate was presumed to lie in the pursuit of creative writing, as it is so strangely called, did we not hope that he would always write darkly for "radical" reviews? The chilling

fact that nobody reads either dissertations or metaphysical verse out of any motive save devotion to duty did, perhaps, occasionally evoke discomfort. Most of us have, nevertheless, faced the job of what is called "productive scholarship" with a grim determination worthy of the sergeants of Bataan. Even the readers, we find, are sentries sniffing the treason of a confrere's minor errors.

Perhaps the time has come to assume that although dissertations are valuable and pure scholarship a noble ideal, the central humanistic purpose is not implicit in these things. That we need a new definition of what we mean by education is easily and often said. But the validity of every educational ideal depends ultimately upon the validity of the underlying concept of man; and precisely this is difficult to establish in a time as fully committed to philosophic pluralism as is our own. The historian knows that the relative matter-of-factness with which the Middle Ages accepted the Catholic ethical pattern derived from the authority of the Church, which the universities accepted in much the same way as modern schools bow to the inevitability of trustees. German schools and universities became great because of widespread official approval of the Kantian ethic, and of Lutheran reliance upon theological faculties as expounders of sound doctrine. Education as these institutions understood it was, therefore, an august and exacting enterprise, the ultimate objective of which was the fostering of doctrine giving form to the outlook and conduct of the citizen. England, on the other hand, clung for centuries to a pattern of humanistic education based on the code by which the gentleman lived. In these as in other instances, educational effort was consonant with generally agreed upon social and ecclesiastical mores. When these mores were challenged, the schools declined or changed.

Possibly one might argue successfully that the American idea of man likewise served until recently to unify and humanize our educational efforts. Did not the American strive to "take care of himself," even while seeking, eventually, to be of service to society? Self-reliance, not always interpreted in the same manner, was a coveted virtue. Nevertheless, we were always haunted

by the dream of a constantly improving, ever more generous, social order to result from the dedication of the individual to the common tasks of the people. Belief in the possibility of progress has been a normal characteristic of the American mind. We as a people would doubtless not have subscribed to the high importance of individual service to society if we had been skeptical of success. This belief in progress must not be interpreted in terms of European philosophy. It has rather been, in the better moments of our history at least, a sort of virtue of hope appended to the virtue of magnanimity. And despite the critics, we did make a good deal of headway. We developed working institutions of republican government. We trusted ourselves with more than a modicum of freedom. And, by and large, we remained generous.

That these social aims sought to find expression in education is obvious. Although from time to time pleas were made for a more epicurean, aesthetic pattern of educated living, the educational leader seldom heeded them. Even today his goal is usually the training of competent individuals possessing social consciences. Much moral philosophy, some of it good and more of it exceedingly bad, has been written from this point of view. One has only to think of the literature of the Progressive Education movement, or of what college presidents said in response to government demands during the present war. Here the tint of Pragmatism is often manifest. Pragmatism may well have been an effort to reconcile our realistic pioneering with our ethical worries and social responsibilities. It remains a kind of metaphysics without metaphysical depth of form. To much of what you say in criticism of it I subscribe. But let us remember that it might have been far worse. It might have been something like what one finds in the books of Dietrich Klagges.

Quite evidently, on the other hand, our special American educational assumptions would face a stern test as soon as self-reliance and the social conscience themselves came under attack. The call to battle against both was sounded long ago. Whenever men believed that the "rugged individual" was the kind of person Spinoza castigated, they also began to assert that the social

conscience of that individual was no more than a sham. Therewith the pragmatic philosophy could be turned against itself. That philosophy had had a firm puritan core. It assumed a beneficent universe, though it no longer often spoke in terms of the Christian Deity. Now, when the critic talked of the individual as *homo rapax*, and of the social conscience as an outmoded prelude to economic engineering, new absolutes were projected in relation to which the single person envisaged by the Pragmatists was considered scarcely more than an acquiescent automaton. At the present moment, the schools are still firmly on the side of tradition. But they are troubled. They have even discovered within themselves habits of shoddy compromise and debilitating superficiality.

To some extent, no doubt, the mass education project to which our schools have been dedicated secretes its own corrosive bile. Toynbee's well-known comment on Yellow Journalism as the immediate consequence of the Education Act of 1870 illustrates the complexity of the problem. If the schools are coveted because of the assumption that learning is economically advantageous, popular demand will inevitably insist that the assumption be proved not illusory. And as a matter of fact many educators have tried hard to demonstrate, from *Who's Who* and other sources, that college is actually an open sesame to a larger income. Much more regrettable, however, is the interpretation of the school as a begetter of hedonistic satisfactions. Of course no one will deny that intellectual pleasure is a good, or that reading has a certain value when it is used only to while away the time. But when reading is little more than indulgence in sensations which are experiments in vicarious physical guzzling, the question whether it is not actually baneful must be put in dead earnest.

It is now impossible to ignore the fact that the average college graduate differs little, in so far as his intellectual attitudes are concerned, from the mass of Americans. Knowledge of what the alumnus reads is sickening. And that this surrender to hedonism involves of necessity the repudiation of intelligence as a social instrument is clear from a hundred examples. One must suffice.

When this war began, it was widely asserted that the American people were not prepared to face their desperate plight because "the colleges" had failed to teach the truth about contemporary problems and events. Mr. Paul V. McNutt repeated the charge at a meeting of the American Association of Colleges shortly after Pearl Harbor. As a matter of fact, our best teachers did their utmost to oppose the partisan and often poorly informed journalism which after 1918 weaned the citizen from realism. But those teachers had no influence. Hayes, Seymour, Wright and the others had a total audience only a fraction of the size of that which read the comments of Mr. Earl Browder. Mr. McNutt obviously had never heard of them. How could these things have happened if the American college graduate read books having an intellectual density greater than that of *If Winter Comes*?

That being the situation, it will not do to assume that anything short of radical reform of the underlying educational ideal can "save the humanities." I for one am not interested in saving them if they cannot save themselves. Expedients can, to be sure, garner a few plums. By compressing the "general education" given by the colleges into the first two years, and by a judicious modification of the requirements for the professional studies, one can compel students to absorb a certain amount of English, History, Mathematics and Philosophy. Of what earthly use is this compulsion if it does not help the student to discover and satisfy a vital need? On the other hand, it is equally evident that one must not erect barriers which automatically prevent the majority of students from getting some humanistic education. Such barriers are, for instance, raised by faculties which insist that all vocational training is incompatible with the "liberal" purpose of the college. Students do not want to find themselves, at the end of four years, totally unprepared to begin any practical task. They are correct in this negative position. I conclude, therefore, that wise and cautious educational planning is valuable, but that it alone will not suffice.

Radical reform cannot be effected through recourse to other educational patterns than those Americans have known. We are

what we have been, for better or for worse. Attempts to transform us into Germans, Frenchmen, or mediaeval Catholics may be picturesque, but they will never be anything else. Going back therefore to the formula of self-reliant individual and social conscience, let us see what can be done, not out of a salesman-like assumption that our American experience is peculiarly sacred, but out of a deep conviction that it is all we have to work with because it is all that we are. Well, what is wrong is, first of all, the absence of what Unamuno called the tragic sense of life. We have come to take it for granted that there is a remedy for every ill. New drugs will cure ancient diseases. Victories which are followed by the hanging of Hitler will usher in brave newer worlds. Nature is beneficent—a storehouse of vitamins and energy, which the inventive genius of man will render more and more subservient. And so on.

It would be disastrous enough if only the yellow journal and the radio advertiser enunciated these fallacies. When one realizes that the American college itself far too frequently preaches the same false doctrine, one has reason for profound alarm. For the terrible truth is that the "self-reliant" modern individual is weirdly unhappy. No gadget will relieve anguish and loneliness of the spirit, curb the suffering caused by the decline of physical beauty when that is the only good, or leave the wife who is mistress solely less distraught when a new mistress appears. All the psychiatrists available cannot dam the mounting torrent of agony that gushes from the flagrant contradiction between our current assumptions of infinite optimism and the laws, or the facts, of psychic life. Sometimes the welled-up misery explodes in the horrible grimace of some tragedy of degradation. But it mounts everywhere behind the façade of our collective life, a bitter and poignant hunger and thirst, an erosion of the last supports of the heart of man, an acid poured into the flesh of the ultimate human *Ding-an-sich*.

And the social conscience? I lived in Germany during the critical years during which Nazism grew strong. It is safe to say that there was then less misery in the country than there

had been even in the years prior to 1914. But there was none of what is termed "security," by which I mean not social insurance but rather a feeling that one could follow any pursuit with relative assurance of lasting freedom to continue. New economic phenomena—inflation, taxation—had demonstrated the precariousness of all reserve financial strength. And beyond that, new forms of mass psychosis had frightened the individual into believing that unless he was in rapport with the dominant psychosis he could not survive. Healthier societies than the German may muster energy to counteract these terrors. They are, nevertheless, part and parcel of modern life as such, and they have poisoned more than the air even in America. For how can the social conscience function unless it feels that the forces against which it contends are not overwhelming the individual man? One has only to compare older expressions of the American mind in such books as those of Miss Addams and Mrs. Dorr with, say, the writings of Mr. Burnham to see what is meant. If social betterment is a problem in engineering, why should one expect anything to matter save the discovering of the efficient engineer?

Surely we cannot go on assuming that life is all rainbows and nature a fairy godmother if we are no longer certain that as individuals we can do something about either. What can save us from the craze of fear is, therefore, only a restatement of our ideals in terms of cosmic reality. We have to understand our weakness and our tragedy in order to realize our strength. Personally, I do not think that this understanding is possible without Theism and all that it implies. A humanism which assumes permanent values without positing Permanent Value seems to me to be aping a player who moves chessmen about a board without realizing that there is such a thing as a game of chess. I shall not argue the matter further, because obviously American education is not yet in a mood to look upon a discussion of Theism as an issue of practical moment. We shall merely take it for granted, as was done at the outset, that the humanities are concerned with values, and that a value is a good as distinguished by the informed conscience from an evil. If these values can make

the individual inwardly self-reliant—instead of merely self-reliant in terms of monetary or power success,—then we may hope, with Spinoza, for a restoration of moral balance.

To speak of values at all is to assume as an indispensable prelude the validity of means employed in the discovery of values. That is, we must believe in language, in thought, and in moral discernment as aspects of character-forming method. We shall not merely counsel students to learn how to write short-stories that will earn money, but we will also tell them that communication is the individual's sole route of discovery. We shall not discuss the laws of thought as techniques helpful in making friends and influencing people, for that is the manner in which the Sophists discussed them; but we shall talk about them as matters even more vital than the laws of hygiene and physics. We shall ban relativism as if it were the plague, and insist that discernment of the good has been the rigorous business of all the rigorous philosophies. I should say that this hard work is more precious even than is concern with the world's great thinkers and writers. It is not a hundred books which matter, but rather how to grow intellectually while reading a book. Youth simply cannot have too much of what the French call *explication des textes*, or what the old Schoolmen called logic. Asking them to read Kant and Aquinas before they have known these things is like asking a boy to play a Bach toccata before he has learned his scales.

That is why, incidentally, the American system of vacations is excellent, provided it is properly utilized. Young men who work during the summers come to know the speech of common men, in which there is little learning but often much of shrewd, hard common sense. They drop the habit of exclusive association with abstractions, which is the inevitable characteristic of formal academic study, for a useful time, returning to it with mingled humility and realism. The four-semester college is an act of surrender to bookishness from which no possible good can come. On the other hand, collegiate loafing during three months of summer, on the theory that young people need a rest, is a shocking concession to false gods. It will never do any young person

harm to mingle with farmers and laborers, artisans and sportsmen. What does matter incalculably is the concession to hedonism which is implicit in leisure at a time when leisure is not necessary.

There will come an hour, sooner or later, when the young mind will begin to explore down alluring intellectual paths. Then he must have all possible freedom. The moment will have come to loosen the bonds of formal requirement and of pedagogical interference. The good college is one whose teachers will sense intuitively that their student is at the beginning of this journey, and will make available encouragement and stimulus, guidance and bluff comment, as required. Whether you call the result of such intuition the "honors system" or not is an item of no consequence. "Honors" can be as bald and unproductive as any other of a dozen educational methods if improperly managed. And I make bold to say that failure is principally due to the fact that as teachers we do not light the way to any future conceivable to a young mind. The scholar, doomed to his research within the narrow limits of his specialization, prides himself on talking to none save his equals. But your boy must live among men. Therefore, what you really want is not the bright lad's eventual thesis on Propertius's syntax, but his self-reliance and his conscience. We have got, therefore, to get these scholars of ours out among men. May the time come when they stand at street corners as Francis and Bernard stood at the cross-roads; when they go into prisons and counting-houses; and when they share in every civic effort!

Above all, we do not want a dismal college, with impossible standards of achievement. What matters is, after all, not so much whether a young man does what he is told by his elders as whether he does what he is told by his own best self to do. Once I had a student who was asked to compete for the honor of writing a class ode. He submitted a sonnet, which had to be rejected because it was that. Nevertheless, it was a good sonnet, which I included years later in an anthology, from which it has been quoted widely. Therefore, I say let there be discipline

but also laughter—that laughter in company which, as Bergson wrote, makes community. One must also not be chary of games, unless they become pageants which gamble for huge sums and pander incidentally to the worst instincts of the crowd. Let your college be as human as the word humanities implies.

It seems to me, then, that we can send the American people off thirsting for the “liberal arts” if we tell them the truth about themselves and about ourselves. That truth will hurt, as truth has always hurt. But unless it is preached with sincerity and sacrifice, the triumph of vapidty will be followed by the victory of social dissolution. The modern individual simply cannot stand on the creaking floor now under his feet. To tell him that he will have a private airplane, or sit on a plastic chair, or live in a prefabricated house, may amuse him for a time, or even keep him gainfully employed. But he is not a motor, nor is he made of lucite, nor can he dodge the difficult business of shaping his own life. For heaven’s sake, let us not say to him that together with these marvels he will have a great deal of leisure which he can devote to Milton and Shakespeare. Let us tell him in words which he can understand that the house of his soul will tumble in a heap about him unless he builds it aright. And having said that as earnestly as we know how, let us get back to work. It is a big job we have to perform. It is to defeat the principalities and the powers which are, without realizing it, drying up the substance of American life.

by Herbert Marshall McLuhan

EDGAR POE'S TRADITION

POE is much in need of an evaluation which will relate him to the American culture and politics of his day, for Poe was the only American man of letters in the nineteenth century who displayed, unequivocally, a mode of awareness at once American and cosmopolitan. That is to say, Poe felt his time, but none the less wrote with a sense of the past in his bones. He objectified the pathetic cleavages and pressures of the age in a wholly unprovincial way. When he died in 1849 there was no writer in England or America who was not, in comparison with him, exploiting a merely local awareness and a merely local response to the psychological tensions of the time. However, the organization of his sensibility, with its dislocations and inadequacies, is never derivative but authentic and first-hand. Thus he and Byron are in the same tradition, but he is not Byronic.

The problem here is not to evaluate Poe's work in relation to the often vital, but always provincial, New England products. But it is evident that Poe's writing had a fitness, an immediacy of impact, and a relevance to European consciousness wholly unlike that of Emerson, Hawthorne, or even Henry James. Indeed, everything about Poe (including his strikingly symbolic private life) was strictly relevant to the problems of his age. And this faculty for relevance confers on him that air of infallible esthetic efficiency which makes integral the man and the writer. He has no loose ends. He left no unfinished experiments. He uttered himself.

The erudition of Lowell and Longfellow was not his, but neither did he partake of their vagueness and uneasy professorial eclecticism. They read and ruminated while he was seizing with the gusto of pre-ordained certitude on facts, symbols, images,

and ideas which became the vehicles of his sensibility. However, Poe's equipment was far from flimsy. He read widely, and with the intensity of the craftsman. Moreover, he had the craftsman's contempt for verbiage masquerading as expression. Poe's literary criticism was the best of his time in America, simply because his own artistic discipline had given him an infallible eye and ear for whatever had been born of a sincere and vital sensibility in immediate contact with its own age. Mr. Hervey Allen says that time has confirmed all of Poe's judgements save his condemnation of Carlyle. Nothing, however, could be more to Poe's credit (and in this one can see the nature of the superiority he enjoyed over Emerson) than his easy penetration into the provincial confusions and over-emphasis of the great Calvinistic mystagogue.

Beside Poe, Emerson is in many ways a mere local sage. For Poe's tones and accents are those of a man conscious of possessing a European and cosmopolitan heritage. Poe cannot be understood apart from the great Byronic tradition (which extends at least back to Cervantes) of the aristocratic rebel fighting for human values in a sub-human chaos of indiscriminate appetite. It is no mere accident that Poe, like Byron, won a European recognition denied to such a great but autochthonous sensibility as Wordsworth's.

I propose here to suggest how Poe's achievements are to be understood in the light of a great tradition of life and letters which he derived from the South of his day. This tradition has been a continuous force in European law, letters, and politics from the time of the Greek sophists. It is most conveniently referred to as the Ciceronian ideal, since Cicero gave it to St. Augustine and St. Jerome, who in turn saw to it that it has never ceased to influence Western society. The Ciceronian ideal as expressed in the *De Oratore* or in St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana* is the ideal of rational man reaching his noblest attainment in the expression of an eloquent wisdom. Necessary steps in the attainment of this ideal are careful drill in the poets followed by a program of encyclopedic scope directed to the

forensic end of political power. Thus, the *doctus orator* is, explicitly, Cicero's sophistic version of Plato's philosopher-king. This ideal became the basis for hundreds of manuals written by eloquent scholars for the education of monarchs from the fifth century, through John of Salisbury and Vincent of Beauvais, to the famous treatises of Erasmus and Castiglione. (*The Prince* of Machiavelli stems from a totally distinct tradition of scholastic speculation, though it still tends to be confused with the Ciceronian tradition.)

The encyclopedic ideal of "Renaissance man" was consciously and explicitly that of Cicero's orator, whether exemplified in a fourteenth-century Italian humanist, or a sixteenth-century Spenser, Sidney, or in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or *Henry V*. This meant that the new gentry were educated along the aristocratic-forensic lines of Cicero's *De Oratore*, as anybody can determine from considering the ingredients of gentlemanly education in any European country of the sixteenth century. So far as America is concerned, this was a fact of decisive importance, since Virginia, and the South in general, was to receive the permanent stamp of this Ciceronian ideal. This is the highly practical and gentlemanly ideal in which knowledge and action are subordinated to a political good. It is thus no accident that the creative political figures of American life have been moulded in the South. Whether one considers Jefferson or Lincoln, one is confronted with a mind aristocratic, legalistic, encyclopedic, forensic, habitually expressing itself in the mode of an eloquent wisdom. This is a fact of the utmost relevance to the understanding of Poe, as we shall see.

To focus the facts about Poe, it is necessary to understand a tradition wholly alien and repugnant to him, namely that of New England. The reader of Mr. Perry Miller's *The New England Mind* will know what is meant when it is said that New England is in the scholastic tradition, and profoundly opposed to "humanism." Briefly, the theocratic founders of Harvard and rulers of New England were Calvinist divines, fully trained in the speculative theology which had arisen for the first time in the twelfth century—the product of that dialectical method in

theology which is rightly associated with Peter Abelard. Unlike Luther and many English Protestants, Calvin and his followers were schoolmen, opposed to the old theology of the Fathers which Erasmus and the humanist-Ciceronians had brought back to general attention after the continuous predominance of scholastic theology since the twelfth century. To the humanists nobody could be a true interpreter of Scripture, a true exponent of the *philosophi Christi*, who had not had a full classical training. So Catholic and Protestant schoolmen alike, were, for these men, the "barbarians," the "Goths of the Sorbonne," corrupting with "modernistic" trash (the schoolmen were called *moderni* from the first) the eloquent piety and wisdom of the Fathers. (The Fathers were called the "ancients" or *antiqui theologi*.)¹

It need hardly be said that this alignment of traditions throws a startlingly vivid light on the relations between learning and religion in the sixteenth century, which subsequent stages of the original quarrel have obscured. In fact, it means nothing less than this: that from Petrarch to Ramus the violent quarrels about the relative claim of different sorts of learning originated in the conflicting claims of grammar and dialectics to be the exclusive method in theology. The sectarian fogs which, from the beginning, involved the basic intellectual struggles of the Renaissance, have likewise prevented American historians from seeing clearly the most important intellectual fact about America—the fact that, geographically separated for the first time in their age-old struggle, there exist, profoundly entrenched in this country, the two radically opposed intellectual traditions which have been warring since Socrates turned dialectics against the rhetoric of his Sophist teachers. Socrates turned from rhetoric to dialectics, from forensics to speculation and definition, raising the issue which pitted Plato and Aristotle against their formidable rival Isocrates, and which pitted the forensic Cicero against Carneades and the Stoics. The same quarrel as to whether grammar and rhetoric,

¹The best published account of the ancient quarrel between the grammatical and dialectical methods in theology is in R. P. McKeon's paper, "Renaissance and Method," *Studies in the History of Ideas*, vol. III.

on the one hand, or dialectics, on the other, should have precedence in organizing the hierarchy of knowledge, is the key to an understanding of the Renaissance from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries. Just when the quarrel, both within the Catholic Church and outside it, was reaching its term, representatives of both parties in the quarrel migrated to America. The schoolmen went to New England, the quasi-humanist gentry to Virginia. (At this time, moreover, the Anglican Church had, with the accession of the patristic and Ciceronian James I, suddenly thrown its weight against the Calvinist party, in favor of the eloquent divines of humanist bent. That is why Andrewes and Donne were able to get royal approval for their patristic rhetoric and grammatical theology. Anyhow, this fact contributed indirectly to directing Southern education along classical-Ciceronian lines.)

Harvard, then, originated as a little Sorbonne, where in 1650 the scholastic methods of Ockham and Calvin, as streamlined by Petrus Ramus, were the staple of education. Logic and dialectics were the basis of theological method, as of everything else at Harvard. Here rhetoric was taught, not for eloquence, but in order to teach the young seminarian how to rub off the cosmetic tropes of Scripture before going to work on the doctrine with dialectical dichotomies. Ramus taught a utilitarian logic for which he made the same claims as pragmatists do for "scientific method." In fact, Peirce, James, and Dewey could never have been heard of had they not been nurtured in the Speculative tradition of the scholastic theologians Calvin and Ramus.²

This helps greatly to explain a most puzzling fact—namely, that New Englanders have felt a perennial congeniality for one

²R. M. Weaver ("The Older Religiousness in the South," *Sewanee Review*, Spring, 1943) provides a good deal of incidental documentation for the present paper. He contrasts the speculative, New England theology with the practical, "political" piety of the South. The work of Werner Sombart, on the economic plane, makes the same point: Scholastic philosophy and theology provided the indispensable viewpoint and technological abstraction which brought about the rise of industrial capitalism. The Southern resistance to technology and industry is inherent, just as the Northern passion for machinery and bureaucracy is inherent in age-old but divergent intellectual traditions. H. J. Ford (*Rise and Growth of American Politics*, pp. 141-142) makes the same contrast between political views of North and South.

strand of French culture. (This is also true of Scotsmen, and for the same reasons.) French universities, that is to say, saw to it that part of France remained scholastic. And Descartes is unthinkable without the Schoolmen (especially the Ockhamists), as Pierre Duhem and Etienne Gilson have demonstrated. Thus, not in spite of Calvinism but because of it, the New Englander finds himself able to communicate with part of European culture. It is not otherwise that we can account for that rich cross-fertilization of seemingly distinct cultures, which occurred when Henry James and T. S. Eliot came into contact with France. Superficially, however, there could be no greater anomaly than that of two provincial Puritans returning English letters to the main channels of European culture.

But what of Poe's affinities with France? If the Calvinistic, scholastic, and academic New Englander has natural roots in the Cartesian traditions of academic France, so has the Ciceronian South maintained relations with Ciceronian and encyclopedist France. For one main current of French letters in the seventeenth century is that of Cicero—an eloquent wisdom politically inspired, and based on universal learning. Whether it is Bossuet and Corneille or Voltaire and Diderot, one has to deal with the forensic, political eloquence of a great tradition whose well-defined roots can easily be examined in the schools of that age. Thus, the American South naturally finds a congenial milieu in France of the eighteenth century—the France of the encyclopedists who rebelled against Descartes. These men proclaimed the Ciceronian origins of their aristocratic republicanism in the very name they bear. And Erasmus, More, Bacon, Swift, Bolingbroke, Burke, or Voltaire would have alike approved the linguistic and forensic program which Jefferson drew up for his university.

Poe must now be focussed in relation to this dichotomy of European and American culture. Thus, merely to mention *The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table* is to summon up a type of man and a type of writing which are antithetical to Poe's mode of being. The New England *ethos* naturally finds its highest level of expression in the scholastic man, and the result is that

the New England professor is autocratic. There is no social life co-extensive with him, nor one able to embody and criticise his thought and actions. Brought up amidst this social nudity and pedagogical earnestness, T. S. Eliot confronted the situation directly in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Here it was that he exploded the heresy of "self-expression," of "message," and of artistic isolation and futility, which had found such congenial soil in New England. On the other hand, vividly aware of the defects of his immediate social environment, Poe is yet naturally and unaffectedly cosmopolitan. Because he understood profoundly the nature of his artistic dependence on that society, he was its vigorous and unremitting critic, scrutinizing its dress, its manners, its reading, its furniture and science; and he utilized these things as the basic materials of his prose. For he is the master of a prose whose ludicity and resilience are unmistakably owing to a society in which good talk is common.

All his life Poe fought with eloquence and versatility of learning to maintain serious standards in current literature, to extend the scope of American letters, and to banish parochial habits of mind. To the end he maintained the need and practicality of a critical review which would transform the taste of society at large. Thus, unlike the New England academicians and recluses, Poe was the man of letters in society. He was not professorial but professional—in the forensic tradition of Dr. Johnson and Macaulay.

This is not the place in which to proceed to a careful study of Poe's writings in relation to his tradition. However, the kind of importance which essentially social and political problems have in an understanding of his work must be indicated briefly. For it was from the experience of the Virginia of his day that Poe was able to project those symbols of alienation and inner conflict which won the immediate assent of Baudelaire himself. (Baudelaire was also an aristocratic dandy, and his devotion to Silver age and patristic rhetoric has implications which relate him decisively to the Ciceronian tradition which has been described.) That Baudelaire should have hailed Poe as he did has

a meaning totally unlike that which belongs to the recognition of Emerson by Carlyle. To appreciate the full significance of this event remained for us to discover today; for English poetry had to wait another seventy years for T. S. Eliot finally to incorporate Baudelaire's sensibility and eloquence. No more striking testimony could be asked for Poe's central location in European tradition. And yet he won that place by the uncompromising integrity with which he dealt with his local American experience. While the New England dons primly turned the pages of Plato and Buddha beside a tea-cozy, and while Browning and Tennyson were creating a parochial fog for the English mind to relax in, Poe never lost contact with the terrible pathos of his time. Coevally with Baudelaire, and long before Conrad and Eliot, he explored the heart of darkness.

Within this perspective of deep-lying cultural dichotomy it becomes possible for the critic to show that "the heart of darkness" for Byron, Baudelaire, and Poe is quite distinct from what it is for Hawthorne and Melville. Evil is a fact, perhaps the most important fact, in the New England consciousness. But the evil which Poe and Baudelaire experienced had very different roots from that of the North. It is the evil which led Byron to evoke endless Satanic heroes as objective correlatives in his poems, the evil, not of Calvinistic depravity, but of the split-man and the split-civilization. The psychological exploration of uneasy conscience as carried on by Hawthorne or Melville could only regain contact with European consciousness after James and Eliot had visited the fountains of French culture. But Poe lived in a community which had never breached its relations with the original traditions of its culture. And let us remember that these traditions were, long before the sixteenth century, strongly antipathetic to those which were brought to New England.

Considering this cultural dichotomy now in a new perspective, it is possible to approach even closer to a solution of a major Poe problem: Why is Poe essentially preoccupied with symbols and situations of horror and alienation? Or it can be put this way: Why did the split consciousness of an aristocratic-seigneurial

society express itself in symbols of Satanism, sadistic horror, of fear, violence and desolation? Byron, Baudelaire, and Poe are here together in a literary tradition which stretches back at least to Cervantes, and which is much alive today, even in such degenerate forms as crime fiction with its, significantly, dandified sleuths.

Without considering Corneille and Racine, the matter is obvious enough in Milton's Satan, and even more in the cult of literary diabolism associated with that Satan in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The issues are strikingly defined by Marvell in his *Horatian Ode*, where he explains how the aristocratic ideals of noble being have been swept aside by the vulgar Cromwell, whose genius is for destructive action rather than for harmony of thought and feeling. Tradesman Richardson offers an obvious incarnation of the same conflict in his *Clarissa Harlowe*. This time it is from the "Cromwellian" point of view. Thus Lovelace, the prototype of the aristocratic villain, provides us with the pattern of the Byronic hero and the villain of Victorian melodrama, to say nothing of Dupin, Sherlock Holmes, Lord Peter Wimsey, Rhett Butler, and the Hollywood pantheon. The characteristic pose is that of the man "beautiful but damned," the man who scorns the ignoble conventions and petty, calculating bustle of commercial society. This man is wholly alienated from society, on one hand, and feared and admired by the commercial members of society, on the other hand. The entire conflict is perfectly dramatized in the relations between Edgar Poe and his guardian, John Allan. John Allan secretly admired Poe quite as much as Richardson revered Lovelace. Allan despised himself in the presence of Poe, and Poe in turn pitied and scorned him.

A figure of great interest, who can best be seen in relation to what has here been said of Poe, is Whitman. Many people have mistaken him for another variety of Thoreau or the noble savage of the frontier. Actually, as Sidney Lanier very clearly saw and explained long ago, Whitman is an inverted Byronic dandy. His tradition is that of the aristocratic and political South. He has nothing in common with the dons of New England. The

inverted Byronic dandyism of Whitman is evident enough as soon as one applies the cipher of reversal. Put uncritical embrace of all social facts in place of fastidious scorn and withdrawal. Put pose of noble and omnivorous yokel for pose of satiated estheticism of the worldling. Put tones of "barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world" for the elegant scorn of a Byronic hero excoriating mankind from a midnight crag. Put boisterous adolescent athleticism for the world-weary *flâneur*, and the pattern is complete. That is why Whitman was so eagerly accepted by the esthetes who had only to make one simple adjustment—that of reversal—in order to fraternize with him. Perhaps this also explains his very considerable failure to convince us of his own sincerity. He is *faux naïf*. He is often like a man flapping his arms and stamping his feet to restore circulation. More important than this implied valuation is the fact that America's political poet belongs to the aristocratic Southern tradition, a representative of the Ciceronian and forensic ideal of an eloquent wisdom.

Without at present pursuing this theme further, it can be maintained that whereas Poe's art is political, in that its vehicle and dramatic organization concern those symbols which express a basic split in society and personality, the art of Hawthorne, Melville, and James is wholly non-political in its concern with the lacerations of the merely individual conscience—even when this conscience is typical of a certain type of community. For the fact which confronts this individual conscience is, finally, not political dislocation but the theological problem of moral deprivation. Distinct from this type, and within the coördinates of a thoroughly rational sensibility, Poe brought morbidity into focus, gave it manageable proportions, held it up, not for emulation, but for contemplation.

In his own fashion, then, Poe had as great a working faith in civilization as Jefferson himself, and by defining and projecting the inner emotional drama of his time he probably did as much as Jefferson to energize American life. For there is intense vitality in his "morbidity."

by R. M. Weaver

ALBERT TAYLOR BLEDSOE

A hopeful interest in the New South has succeeded for the past seventy-five years in focussing attention upon aspects of change in Southern life. This has left in oblivion a number of brilliant spokesmen of the old regime, who if only for the sake of historical completeness, deserve a picture in some gallery. The opinion is widespread that the Confederacy's right to existence was defended by nothing other than political declamations and bullets. On the contrary, a good deal of cerebration took place below the Potomac after the South felt itself seriously threatened, and buried in dusty magazine files today is a respectable body of acute reasoning on the subjects of slavery and secession. Chief among the intellectual defenders of the South was Albert Taylor Bledsoe, one of the most curious intransigents in American history.

Bledsoe was born in Frankfort, Kentucky, in 1809, his family having come into this region while it was yet a part of Virginia. His father, Moses Bledsoe, founded a newspaper in Frankfort, and an uncle, Jesse T. Bledsoe, taught law and music, one of the odd combinations not uncommon in those days, at Transylvania University when this flourishing institution of the West was a rival of Harvard for academic distinction. Like many another young man of promise in this period he was sent to West Point, and here he became acquainted with Jefferson Davis and R. E. Lee. After a brief experience in the Indian wars he abandoned military life to take up the study of theology at Kenyon College in Ohio. A period as minister in the Protestant Episcopal Church terminated when his naturally uncompromising mind found the doctrine repellent, and he changed next to the field of law.

Bledsoe spent the years from 1838 to 1848 practicing before

the Supreme Court of Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas were fellow members of the bar. That he was highly successful as a pleader before this tribunal is attested by the fact that he more than once received the basket of champagne which was by custom awarded to the lawyer winning the largest number of suits in a year. It is a matter of curious interest that when Lincoln was challenged to a duel by General James Shields, Bledsoe, drawing upon his West Point training, endeavored to teach his colleague the use of the broadsword. But the two men differed on the issues which split the American Union, and in the postwar era when the Lincoln legend began to take shape, Bledsoe was among the first to set down a candid estimate of the martyred president.

In 1848 he changed occupations again, this time to become a professor of mathematics, first at the University of Mississippi and later at the University of Virginia. Meanwhile his religious interest had remained strong, and in the midst of secular employment he found time to publish *An Examination of President Edwards' Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will* (1845), and *A Theodicy, or Vindication of the Divine Glory* (1853). The former work, which he described as "a complete triumph over the scheme of moral necessity," was the first evidence of his great talent as a controversialist, but his career as a champion of the South began in 1856 with the publication of a book-length tract entitled *An Essay on Liberty and Slavery*.

Most of the literature called forth by the slavery controversy is topical and superficial, but Bledsoe was profound enough to see that the real crux lay in the issues raised by the French Revolution. From this time until his death more than twenty years later he continually attacked the romantic postulates underlying this movement. A believer in the necessity of divine sanctions for government, he denied the existence of natural rights. The theory that man is naturally good he regarded as the grand heresy of the modern world, and the source of all social disorder. His basic position was that libertarianism rests upon a false metaphysic, for it is incorrect to suppose that liberty and order are

antagonistic principles. This misconception, seemingly one of the permanent confusions of political thought, assumes that liberty and order limit one another, and that to increase one we must somehow diminish the other. Bledsoe sought to show that they are mutually sustaining and that increase in one promotes increase in the other: thus, when a state has gained in order, the foundation for more liberty is laid. Just as every orderly arrangement of our lives is made to free us for purposeful activity, so the regulations of a state have no meaning in themselves, but are instrumental toward its general aims. The abolitionists were absurd, he thought, when they talked of freedom as something that could be extracted and exhibited apart from the objects of the social whole. This phase of his case is substantially the Miltonic doctrine of the inseparability of freedom and right reason. Even the great Puritan rebel declared that "orders and degrees jar not with liberty, but well consist."

With this principle established, Bledsoe proceeded with its application to the institution of slavery. Like all conservatives, he believed in a structural society, and his thesis can be reduced to the proposition that a whole cannot be harmonious unless its parts are in their proper places. The abolitionists insisted on denying those differences in men which everyone knows to exist, and this out of zeal to conform to the abstractions of French political theory. It was plain that the negro in America constituted a strongly differentiated minority, and no prescription was valid for him unless it took into account his nature and the nature of the polity into which he had been thrust. Since the right to freedom is predicated upon the ability to use it, and since the negro was without experience in the conduct of a civilized state, the law could abridge his freedom as it does that of children and defectives. If liberty were an equal blessing to all, then all would have equal right to liberty. But if one accepts the fact of this difference between the races, the corollary follows that complete equality would result in "terrific inequality."

A feature of the *Essay* which will surprise readers unacquainted with the controversial literature of the time is a long section of

arguments drawn from the Bible. A deficient knowledge of history has led some modern writers to express amazement that Christian ministers could make use of Scripture to defend slavery. They were overlooking the fact that this was the South and not New England, and in the South of this period the Bible was revealed truth. Slavery was an institution virtually universal throughout the ancient world; it is well recognized in the Old Testament, and it is not without endorsement in the New; indeed, a strict constructionist interpretation almost requires its defense. Nothing was more congenial to Bledsoe's mind than contention over Biblical passages, and his thorough but tiresome exposition is in the meticulous style of the seventeenth century.

The Fugitive Slave Act gave him an opportunity to point out the real nature of the sectional battle, which in Gerald Johnson's felicitous expression was essentially a contest between the Law and the Prophets. It may be doubted whether history affords a more instructive instance of the struggle between organic society and the written guarantees which were supposed to limit its choice of action. The more radical of the abolitionists were, of course, revolutionaries, appealing with Transcendentalist blessing to the law of conscience against the written law of the land. But behind the Constitution, behind the Fugitive Slave Act, and behind decisions of the courts the South stood as behind barricades in the face of revolution. Such patterns repeat themselves, and today we see a strikingly analogous case as the great corporations battle behind Constitutional safeguards and judicial interpretations to protect their prerogatives and advantages.

Repressible or not, the conflict arrived in 1861, and Bledsoe, who had joined the Confederate army with the rank of colonel, was soon made assistant secretary of war. This appointment was entirely unfortunate, because the work of the office was routine, and for routine employment of any kind he had no capacity. His temperament was that of the philosophic recluse; given to long periods of immersion, he would arouse himself for a burst of activity and then lapse again into reflection. J. B. Jones in *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary* has left an unflattering picture of him

engaged in the toil of this office. Under the burden of regular application he complained incessantly. Almost every day brought announcement of his resignation. On one occasion, reports Jones, he was assigned the duty of revising a manual of military tactics for use by the Confederate army. All he had to do was cross out the U in USA and write C, "and yet the colonel groans over it." His irascibility and his arrogance with superiors led to constant friction, and in 1864 President Davis found him a new field of service. He was sent abroad to gather in European libraries materials for an adequate statement of the constitutional rights of the Southern states. What manner of publication was intended is not known, but before he could complete his work the war had ended, and he returned home with his notes.

Some time after the surrender General Lee remarked to Bledsoe: "Take care of yourself, Doctor; you have a great task; we look to you for our vindication." Yet in their careers the two men took precisely opposite roads from Appomattox. Lee, always a nationalist, confessing himself before the outbreak of war "one of those dull souls who cannot see the good in secession," accepted the verdict of the sword with a soldier's realism and advised Southerners to make themselves good Americans. It was impossible for one of Bledsoe's temperament to submit to forces he believed wrong on principle, and prospect that the civil leaders of the Confederacy might be tried for treason led him to sit down and write "in white heat," it is said, the masterpiece of the Southern apologias. This was *Is Davis a Traitor; or, was Secession a Constitutional Right Previous to the War of 1861?* In the extensive body of Southern political writing there is no more brilliant specimen of the polemic. For the drudgery of a clerk's office he might have been unfit, but he was a born controversialist, able to reduce shapeless masses of argument to simple propositions, and zealous to drive the shot home, to make the opponent conscious of his sins and errors. Beside the prolixity of Davis's *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* and the tediousness of Stephens's *A Constitutional View of the Late War*

between the States, his *Is Davis a Traitor?* stands as a model of conciseness and cogent argument.

The greater part of this little volume is taken up with recapitulation of the interminable metaphysical debate over constitution and compact. Bledsoe was interested in establishing three points: first, that the states had been originally sovereign and independent; second, that they had entered into a voluntary compact which carried limited commitments; and third, that certain Northern leaders had designedly and for selfish reasons spread the notion that the Constitution had been entered into by the people without the mediation of the states. Though belatedly asserted in war and lost, this case was still formidable in law and equity.

As may well be imagined, Bledsoe's chief target was Webster, and the chapter "Mr. Webster vs. Mr. Webster" is a scornful review of the record of the great expounder. Declaring that the Webster of 1833 was to the Webster of 1850 as "Philip drunk to Philip sober," he showed how the trend of events had driven the New Englander to accept the Southern view of the Constitution. "Mr. Webster's real opinion, however, seems to have been that the Constitution was a compact between the states. His great speech of 1833 may have convinced others; it certainly did not convince himself; for during the remainder of his life he habitually spoke of the Constitution as the compact formed by the states. Especially after his race was nearly run, and instead of the dazzling prize of the presidency, he saw before him the darkness of the grave, and the still greater darkness that threatened his land with ruin, he raised the last solemn utterances of his mighty voice in behalf of 'the compact of the Constitution,' declaring that as it had been 'deliberately entered into by the states,' so the states should religiously observe 'all its stipulations.'"

Bledsoe was never more happy than when dilating upon New England's poor regard for consistency. The theme of "New England hypocrisy," a favorite with all Southern publicists of the period, moved him to sardonic humor, and the perfect topic for this was, of course, the Hartford Convention. As early as the winter of 1803-4 the New England states, feeling that they

were a minority suffering injustice, entertained plans for dissolving the Union. The War of 1812 with its injury to maritime commerce deepened their resolve to such an extent that a convention was called at Hartford to decide on practical steps. Meeting in 1815, the group chose commissioners to go to Washington, and according to John Quincy Adams, went to the point of selecting a military leader to serve in case its demands were not met. The signing of peace put an end to this secession movement, but a single quotation from the journal of this convention will show the trend of sentiment: "Whenever it shall appear that these causes are radical and permanent, a separation by equitable arrangement, will be preferable to an alliance by constraint, among nominal friends, but real enemies, inflamed by mutual hatred and jealousy, and inviting by intestine division, contempt and aggression from abroad."

The substance of *Is Davis a Traitor?* was that the Civil War had shifted the basis of the United States government from compact to conquest, and that however effective the victorious section had made its will, it did not have legal grounds for punishing Confederates. Bledsoe witnessed some practical result of his labor when Robert Oulds and Charles O'Connor, attorneys for Jefferson Davis, made use of the book in preparing their defense; but the Federal government, apparently feeling the weakness of its legal position, allowed the case to be dismissed.

In the year following the publication of *Is Davis a Traitor?* Bledsoe set himself a larger task of the same nature. Together with William Hand Browne, who later became a distinguished teacher at Johns Hopkins University, he founded *The Southern Review* in Baltimore for the purpose of further vindicating the South and of waging continuous war against the "disorganizing heresies" unloosed by Northern triumph. Despite great discouragements he kept it going for the remaining ten years of his life, and it is today unquestionably the best repository of unreconstructed Southern thought.

Looking as always at the more fundamental causes of social disorder, Bledsoe renewed his attacks upon the sentimental opti-

mism of the French Revolution, against which he defended a religious, authoritarian theory of government. "With the absolute supremacy of the French School, whose doctrines are so flattering to the pride and ignorance of man, there arose the self-idolatry of the men of 1789, and also 'the dominant idea of the last century,' that governments and institutions make the people." He mocked the prevalent notion that men can be regenerated by "an idea." Because the government of the United States had not been "adjusted to the great facts and laws of the moral world," it became "a gigantic and degrading tyranny." Because the founders of the American Union had not taken into account the natural depravity of man, the system which they devised, however unexceptional from the secular point of view, was unable to stand the test of history. "The causes of the late war," he wrote, "had their roots in the passions of the human heart. Under the influence of those causes almost everything in the new system worked differently from what was anticipated." At the founding of the Union the North and the South had struggled together like Jacob and Esau in the womb "with almost fatal desperation." After the government had been established, this struggle was continued through a series of crises, and following each the majority section grew bolder and more tyrannical as it grew stronger. The fundamental error of the designers of the Constitution proved to have been the clothing of man instead of law with supreme power. "'Man is free by nature,' says Locke, but according to the infinitely more profound aphorism of Aristotle, 'man is a tyrant by nature.'" Hence when the majority found it could have its way, it trampled the law into the dust, and so it will always be when man either singly or collectively is made the arbiter. "The legislators of 1787 did not know that man is a fallen being; or, if they did, they failed to comprehend the deep significance of this awful fact."

With this example of human failure before him, Bledsoe could return to the errors of the French radicals. The great mistake of those theorists, he argued, was the constructing of an imaginary man who was not to be found when the actual task of making

institutions work commenced. "The more shallow the theory on which our politics are based, the sooner will they be ground to powder and scattered before the angry winds." The theme of man's natural depravity challenged his resources as a theologian, and he would at times rise to the earnestness and intensity of an Old Testament prophet. "The new Republic of '87, being founded on a presumptuous confidence in man, was doomed to fall, or to undergo sad changes and transformations." And, he repeated, "As often as the experiment may be made, it will be demonstrated in the grand theater of history, that the purity, the equality, and the freedom of all men, is one of the most fatal delusions that ever issued from the brain of theorist, or convulsed the world with horrible disorder." His view was summed up in the Apocalyptic cry: "Woe betide all the proud polities of self-idolizing man."

In addition to combating the secular theory of government—whose classic expression is, of course, "government of the people, by the people, and for the people"—Bledsoe assigned himself the task of reviewing Northern histories of the war as they came from the press. They were appearing in increasing number, and many of them, partly because of patriotic zeal and partly because of inattention to strict facts, carried inaccurate stories and questionable interpretations. Upon these he fell with determined savagery. One can almost detect the note of glee as he warms up for such exercise. He thus approaches John William Draper's *History of the American Civil War*: "The author of course gives himself credit for perfect fairness and impartiality. . . . The promise is fair, but what of the performance? We shall judge the tree not by its blossoms but by its fruits. If these happen to be misrepresentations, calumnies, and lies, what do we care for the author's good intentions? Or for any other hollow, hypocritical thing that bears such deadly fruit?" George Bancroft was saluted in similar fashion. "There have been bad men and bad teachers always," Bledsoe wrote, "but society was safe as long as it shut them up in its moral lazarus-houses. When it makes them its high priests, and spreads its garments and palm branches for

them to tread on, those who love it may begin to despair." School histories of the United States of Northern authorship moved him to the highest pitch of indignation, for they were spreading the very doctrines he had established the *Review* to counteract. Characterizing them as "crude compilations of malice and mendacity," he said that he could not afford to follow their "innumerable lies, great and small," but he warned Southern parents to keep their children out of schools where such books were used.

Bledsoe could remark with approval that a collection of Southern war poetry reflected "an intense, unquenchable, personal hatred of Northerners both as a race and as individuals." When Ward Lamon's *Life of Lincoln* appeared, he seized the opportunity to set down his own recollection of the man, with whom, he declared, he had held almost daily intercourse at the bar of Springfield. "It is believed by the world at large that hatred of oppression, coupled with a love of freedom, was Mr. Lincoln's ruling passion. Nothing is farther from the truth." Instead, thirst for distinction was the "one, intense, all-absorbing passion of his life." Bledsoe grew more shrill as the years passed, and in a bitter and violent passage he described his former associate as the ideal man to lead the "Northern Demos" in its war to subjugate the South. "For if, as we believe, that was the cause of brute force, blind passion, fanatical hate, lust of power and greed of gain, against the cause of constitutional and human rights, then who was better fitted to represent it than the talented but the low, ignorant and vulgar, railsplitter from Illinois?" Lincoln was the "low-bred infidel of Pigeon Creek," in whose eyes "the Holy Mother" was "as base as his own."

The unbookish Southern people whom the *Review* championed would neither read it nor support it, and by 1870 its founder, whose unflagging energy sometimes supplied half the content of an issue of 250 pages, was beginning to feel the effects of frustration. Declaring himself "deeply impressed with the vanity of all earthly things," he resolved to dedicate his magazine thenceforward to the glory of God. Without ceasing to be a Southern organ, the *Review* became more religious in tone, and in the final issues

Bledsoe found occasion to renew a theological dispute of extraordinary bitterness with Robert Lewis Dabney, another Southern spokesman as doughty as himself.

Walter Hines Page was to say that slavery, politics, and religion were the three chief curses of Southern life. When Bledsoe died in 1877, there passed away a man who had spent the better part of his career as an exponent of each, not on the level of superficial journalism, but with reference to first principles. Everything for which he battled was destined to be beaten. Slavery (waiving certain modern forms as debatable) is extinct throughout the civilized world; the question of Southern secession has been answered as far as force can answer it; and the theology whose points he sought to sustain has been softened down into a milk-and-water humanism. Where would one look to find another such sponsor of lost causes and impossible loyalties? Can anything be salvaged from the thought of a mind which ran so perfectly counter to the path of history? The easy modern verdict will be that Bledsoe was another gifted Southerner condemned by the tumult of his age and the defeat of his people "to keep with phantoms an unprofitable strife."

It would seem on the contrary that history is again trying to teach the lesson which he vainly endeavored to make heard amid the din of the Gilded Age. This is the need of an abstract, metaphysical law which will hold when all else fails. It is the controlling belief which former ages have found in religion and in myths. His reiteration that sanctions which are merely human must fail, and that man needs protection against his own wicked impulses places him before the French Revolution and aligns him with the political realists. Modern man begins to grow weary of self-canonization and is on the threshold of recovering the old truth that dignity comes through identification with something greater than self.

The pragmatic liberalism which he fought has done its worst, and today the world, groping for some kind of absolute, totters uneasily between fascism and communism. It may well be that before it can again achieve stability, before it can again find some

by LeRoy Leatherman

THE SPORTSMAN

THE day was hot, the air close and thick. But toward the last of the afternoon, in the quiet time before the sun went down, there was a light cool rain. When it started, Jim Daigre was down the hill back of the house playing in the branch. He had in a small sheltered bay a fleet of magnolia-leaf boats. The fleet had just been through a high storm in the bay, a tropical storm that had come crashing in from the dark green ocean, ripping the fleet apart, casting it dangerously near the Suicide Shoals. He had stood knee-deep in the ocean, his mouth, like Neptune's, filled with wind, and he had cast the storm with his small hand. Miraculously the fleet had survived. Now that the weather was quite clear ("The sky is blue and clear." "Aye, aye, Sir!"), the fleet was leaving the bay, gracefully with full white sails. ("The bearing is dead ahead, mate. We're going to sail the Great Eastern Ocean." "Aye, Sir!") The mate struck up a nautical song and the courageous captain joined in.)

Suddenly a huge raindrop fell. It hit dead center of the proudest of the fleet . . . a long grey-black leaf that curled at the ends so that it rocked beautifully in the slow water. (A cry went up into the black heart of the sky. "We're hit, mate! We're hit!" and the mate said, "Aye, aye.") The magnificent boat spun sideways, dipped water, slowly, slowly ("It is the hand of God." "Yes, Sir.") slowly sank. Quickly another drop and another fell among the boats and every mountainous drop caused a mountainous wave and flung the boats one into the other in a dreadful confusion. Soon they were boats no longer. ("All is lost!" The captain vanished. So did the mate.) They were tattered old leaves sinking in an ocean of a muddy little stream.

Jim, no longer the captain nor the valiant mate, watched as the

fleet went away, then he crawled under the magnolia tree to be out of the rain. He stretched out on the pleasant warm ground and rested his face on the back of one hand. He closed one eye. With the other he looked into a huge world of grass and weeds. Above him the rain beat against the leaves, clattering, the sound of guns being fired a long way off, and the silent shells dropped with deadly accuracy into the green world at his eye.

A cricket appeared and began to pick his way with elaborate caution through the tangle of grass, as if he knew he was in danger of being killed by a raindrop . . . a black soldier on crutches, crossing a green battlefield. The bright shells beat down around him but he went on bravely. His was a secret mission. He approached a tall drooping blade of grass. A shell hit suddenly and stayed for a moment, gleaming, then fell. It hit him, squarely in the back. Jim saw the whole thing. ("Madam, I regret to inform you. . .") He closed his eye. The sound of the rain and the branch and the woods rushed into his ears. When he opened his eye again, the ancient cricket was limping out of sight under a wild violet leaf. The violet waved, a flag over a place of safety.

After a while the rain stopped, left only a light breeze. Jim sat up. All around him there was a vast wreckage. The terrific battle had left the world a ruin. The violet was broken; part of its petals were sunk in a muddy little pool . . . the last outpost destroyed. ("I am sorry to report, sir, Mr.—What's your-name, that the world has been destroyed.")

The sun came out. It was a blood-red blur among the trees on the other side of the branch. A mocking-bird swooped down, glided across the water and landed on a pine limb and stood gracefully moving its tail, balancing itself with the limb's sway. Somewhere close a cricket whirred. Jim crawled over to the beach. The last red sunlight came full onto the sand. All around him there were little marks, rain-marks, like the hoof prints of some tiny little animal who came out to play only when it rained. He started drawing lines between the prints with his

finger. He made a design. He sat there making fine designs all over the sand until his father came out of the woods.

Mr. Daigre was wet and muddy and he looked very tired. His hip-boots were caked with yellow mud all the way up to the knee. There was a big smudge of it on his forehead over his right eye. He looked like a peddler of junk. His old hat was decorated with trout lures. He had a bait can hooked into his belt, an old army canteen dangling at his hip, a small dip-net stuck in the top of his boot. He was carrying three fishing poles and a casting-rod. When he stepped to the edge of the branch, his hat caught on a low limb and fell off his head. When he stooped to pick it up, he dropped the casting-rod and the fishing poles. He cursed loudly. His voice rumbled into the silent woods. He yelled at Jim.

"Is that all you've got to do?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Well, god damn it, get yourself over here and help me."

Jim waded the cold branch and took some of the load from his father. Together they waded back.

"Damn water's cold."

They walked up on to the sand. The water trickled off the rubber boots and away through the designs in the sand. Jim stood squashing the water in his shoes.

"Did you catch any?"

"Six. Damned snake ate one of them."

Jim wondered if snakes really did eat fish. His father unhooked the bait-can from his belt and set it down on the sand. Then he stuck his hand down through the opening in the top of it and felt around for the end of the fish-string. He pricked his finger on a fin and cursed and kept on cursing in a whisper until he pulled the string out of the mouth of the can. Coming out, it looked like a filthy worm. It became taut and the head of a fish came out of the can. It was a sun perch, colored orange and yellow and red and there were rims of blue around its scales. Next came a goggle-eye. Its eye caught the light and turned into a brilliant shining stone. There were five fish in all, in a

bunch on the end of the string. The sixth was a head only. The safety-nail stuck out of its gills. Below the gills there was nothing but ragged flesh and bone.

"Pretty nice mess of fish."

"Did a snake do that?"

"Moccasin, I guess. Bastard!"

"Did you kill him?"

"No. . . ."

His father dropped the fish suddenly back into the can, closed it and hooked it back onto his belt. Then he walked away up the hill. Ahead of him the big vacant space under the house was very dark and he stood out against it, first his head, then his upper body, then all of him. He seemed to be walking into an immense cave. At the steps that led precipitously up away from the hill into the house, he stopped and turned around.

"You'd better come on in. It's getting dark."

Jim searched under the magnolia tree for a good leaf, found one and went to launch it on the little bay. The boat sat for a moment still on the water, then he pushed it and it went out and hit the current and, as if there were suddenly an intelligent pilot at its helm, it turned and headed swiftly downstream. ("Dead ahead, mate." "It's very dark, sir." "Mate, keep dead ahead.") Soon the boat was gone into the dark. Jim picked up what was left of his father's fishing tackle and went away up the hill.

For a while that night Jim sat with his father and mother on the screened front porch. There was a hammock made of barrel staves and wire hanging at the east corner of the porch and his father lay on it, with one foot on the floor, pushing himself slowly back and then letting his foot drag forward. As he swung the wire made long screeching sounds. Mrs. Daigre sat near in a fan-backed wicker chair that crackled as it rocked. She fanned with a palmetto leaf that whished in the stiff air it made. Jim sat on a low stool near the door, thinking about his mother sitting in old Mrs. Daigre's chair, making the same noises old Mrs. Daigre used to make. In the dark there was no way to

tell whether it was his mother or his grandmother who sat there. While he was thinking this, thinking that perhaps it was his grandmother's old ghost sitting there, he noticed how the screen wire made a cross of the moonlight that came through it, with the moon at the cross's center. Another ghostly thing, a manifestation. He turned his head right and left and the arms of the cross pivoted around the moon. He sat and played with the miracle. Occasionally the sound of the hammock and of his mother's chair became definite in his ears, and while he moved his head and made the cross move, he listened to each one intently. He thought of the sound and the darker form that made it and soon they were the same to him. His parents became a screech and a crackling of wicker. Then his mind would pass back to the cross and the moon, passing lightly by the various lonesome sounds that were coming out of the dark . . . the cricket voices, the croaking of the frogs, and the solitary voice of a mocker in a pine tree top.

Finally he was tired of sitting on the hard little stool. He got up and went outside. The sound of his mother's, his grandmother's chair stopped.

"Where are you going, son?"

He was startled by his mother's voice, as if he had forgotten the dark shape in the old chair could make a human sound.

"Nowhere."

He walked to the edge of the road and stood looking up at the pale sky. It was the color of a faded blue dress. The moon sat balanced just over the trees. He started walking slowly down the hill toward the creek bottom.

"Don't you go going off now."

His father's voice sounded a long way off, as if he were talking in his sleep. He kept walking and his father did not call again. As he went, the sound of the hammock and the chair came after him part of the way down the road, but soon they were silent and he could hear only the usual night sounds. He turned and looked back at the porch. It was nothing but a rectangle of dark. Within it his anonymous parents sat.

At the bottom of the hill where the road levelled off to meet the Big Creek bridge, he stopped. Here the trees stood closer to the edge of the road. A few feet ahead they were crowded against it and bent low over it. The white moonlight in which he stood changed under the trees into deep grey. He walked slowly to this borderline. Just at the edge of it, where the leaf shadows were still distinct, he turned again and looked back. The house, far away on the top of the small hill, stood formless in the moonlight. Only the brilliant tin roof had a definite shape. Below it there were nothing but squares of black and the colorless, shifting walls. Down from there the road came, a shadow-lined streak of white.

He stepped across the borderline. It was as if he had jumped out of sunlight into a deep pool. He had the same sensation of sinking, the same perception of vanishing light . . . the sudden change just below the surface, the rising darkness as he sank, the blackness, the pressure, then the swift, suffocating rise toward the surface. But then he did not quite reach the surface. It was as if he were fixed just below it, as if the light were there just above him. He imagined this to be true and was afraid.

He searched the dark quickly. Ahead stood the moonlit rickety bridge, too far ahead. Nearer, all around him, stood the trees. There was no shape definite enough to threaten him. He stooped and felt in the sand for a rock. At the same time he remembered the captain's bravery, the mate's perfect obedience as they sailed their ship into the dark. Just as he touched the rock, he thought that he should not pick it up . . . the thought of a brave captain. He got it firmly in his hand . . . a badly disciplined mate. A sound came. He jerked himself up. There was something in the woods. With all his strength he hurled the rock.

"God A'Mighty. . . ."

The Something came limping and running and shrieking out of the woods. It was Corley.

"What the . . . what the hell you think you're doing?"

Jim did not move.

"I didn't know it was you."

"It's gonna be sore . . . god damned sore."

"Where did I hit you?"

"Smack on the shin!"

He sat down in the middle of the road and rubbed his shin and groaned.

"I thought you were in Pollock."

"Was . . . working at the saw mill. I thought I'd come see you fore you left. God, it hurts!"

"We can go to my house and put some ointment on it."

"It's all right now. Don't need ointment. Smell the honey-suckle?"

They walked down the road toward the Big Creek bridge. They stood a while on the bridge looking at the moon on the water, not saying anything, just looking, then Corley said, "Come on," and Jim followed him off the bridge and back into the woods. They walked all the way through the woods without saying anything at all. They went quickly, stopped only to look at an old bull frog sitting on a rock in the middle of a little branch. All around him the water was like quicksilver. Finally they came to a steep bank. They had to use the bushes growing on its side to get up. At the top Corley helped Jim to his feet, then whispered,

"Shut your eyes."

Automatically Jim shut his eyes. He heard then all the night sounds and he realized he had come the whole way through the woods without hearing a thing but Corley's breathing and the voice of that one old frog.

"Look now!"

He opened his eyes. He was standing on a high bank. At the bottom of it lay Big Creek. The moon hit in the middle of the creek and made it a solid streak of silver.

"Look over there!"

He looked over to the other side of the creek. At the deep blue that was the horizon there was a plane of darkness that was the tree-tops. But below the tree-tops there seemed to be no trunks. Instead of being flat in the dark, the woods suddenly took on

great depth. In that depth a million lights flickered. He seemed to be looking into an immense hall which was candle-lit.

"Lightnin' bugs are having a meetin'."

All over the woods the lights flickered.

"You reckon they talk with those lights?"

Corley whispered. Jim did not answer.

They stood and watched the meeting until the bugs began to go away. A few of them came across the creek. Corley caught one and it crawled around lighting the cup of his hand.

"Want to see a ring?"

Before Jim answered, Corley pinched the bug between his fingers. A moment later he held out his hand and there on his finger was a tiny greenish light.

"Why did you do that? Why did you kill it?"

The little light glowed for a second longer, then disappeared.

Corley wiped his hand on his pants.

"Let's git home."

They tiptoed into the house and down the long dark hall, guiding themselves on the long table. Jim eased the door to his room open and let Corley go in. The moon came full into the window. It made the mosquito-bar over his bed look strangely solid . . . like a box of fog. They undressed quickly. Corley pulled the bar away from the mattress enough to let Jim wriggle through, then he puffed and cursed until he got himself through and got the net tucked back. Jim crawled to the far edge of the bed. He lay there for a long time staring up at the haze the moonlight made of the mosquito-bar. He listened to Corley snore and to the remarkable whine of a mosquito, shut out. As he went to sleep he saw the lightning bugs drifting in the magical air. Toward morning he woke up. He was lying close to Corley, his head resting on Corley's bony shoulder. He moved over to the edge of the bed but then moved back and went to sleep again.

He awakened, feeling his arm roughly pushed. There was only a faint daylight in the room.

"What's the matter?"

"Get up. We're going fishing."

"I don't know how to fish."

"You can set on the bank and watch."

He pulled the grey net away from the mattress and put his feet down on the rough floor. He thought of splinters and jerked his feet back up, then let them down carefully. Simultaneously he heard Corley's feet touch the floor on the other side. He bent down and looked through the gloom under the bed. There, a great distance away, in the first sunlight were Corley's feet and ankles. They moved around over the floor, the toes turned up to avoid the harsh surface of the old boards, the heels moving up and down. Apart like that they seemed to be things all by themselves, funny-shaped animals.

"Git a move on!"

The whispered words were almost one word, one long hiss. Jim jerked himself straight up. His head whirled from the sudden movement. He felt ashamed. Later they tiptoed into the kitchen and ate breakfast, two jonathon apples, then got cakes and apples for lunch. They searched the back porch for Mr. Daigre's fishing tackle, gathered it all up, and quietly left the house.

It was a brilliant morning. The air was cool with a slight breeze and the whole woods seemed to sparkle. They tiptoed away from the house, walked quickly down the road and at the bridge turned off into the woods. Corley was carrying a bait can and casting-rod and a box of lures. Jim came behind him, unsteady, with other boxes and four long fishing poles. At the bridge they had to take a path that led straight down to the creek's edge. When Jim slid down it, he got the fishing poles tangled in the vines and bushes. Corley had to untangle them.

"Ain't you never carried a fishing pole before?"

"I told you I didn't know how. I've never been fishing."

They followed the creek a way into the woods to where, at a slight bend, it made a deep pool. Here they stopped and Corley walked to the water. A big spot of sunlight came down through the trees and hit the pool's surface. Corley stood looking down where the spot was. He lifted one foot, wavered, balanced himself, and studied the water. Finally he shook his head, as if he

had found out all the secret knowledge of that dark pool and had found the knowledge worthless.

"Ain't none here. We'll go on to Rocky Bottom."

They cut away from the creek and headed through the woods. Jim walked slightly behind Corley so he could let the ends of the fishing poles drag on the ground. The poles bumped on his shoulder and scraped over the ground and once in a while he looked back to see the worm path they were making in the dirt. If he and Corley got lost in the forest, here was a way out, an escape as good as notches in a tree or scraps of cloth hanging on bushes . . . and Indians would think it was a worm's trail. Corley would say, maybe, 'we are lost for all the time,' then he, Jim, would say, 'Here is a way out'. He thought about this for a while then he started looking up into the trees. He walked with his head tilted back, paying no attention to where he walked, only staring up into the magnificent trees. When they passed under a sweet-gum, the leaves close down were yellow-green and luminous in the sun, the ones a little higher up a darker green and shiny, like fine satin, but those highest, those that twirled and twirled in the breeze, were the color of sunlight, like a thousand tiny mirrors flashing. And up through the pines there was the rough grey-brown bark that looked very old even on the smallest trees, and the spindly twisted limbs and on them the sprigs of needles, delicately held, as if in a very old lady's hand.

They followed a well-used path for a long way into the woods, leaving the fishing-pole tracks behind them, and here and there in the loose dirt, the strange impression of their toes and heels. They scarcely spoke. Corley had said fish could hear a sound a long way off. But occasionally he would say something, point to something off the path or back in the woods. "Jack rabbit . . . snake hole . . . snake skin, just shed . . . wolf track, big one!" Jim did not know whether there were wolves in that part of the country, whether that was really a snake hole, but the words sounded fine and Corley's voice came clear in the woods and there was the track behind them if they got lost and there was the fine

day. He walked along stubbing his toes on little roots, scratching his arms on the close bushes, but he did not notice.

Soon Corley turned off the path and headed into the thickest part of the woods. Here the ceiling of leaves and branches shut out the sunlight. Vines hung down all around them, writhing in the breeze. The ground was black and soggy and cold to his bare feet. There was no grass, only here and there a pale shoot of sweetgum or a wild violet. It was a secret place, remarkably still. Suddenly, above them, a bird whistled, "Mocker!" and the beautiful sound, a warning perhaps, rocketed through the tree-tops, spread and seemed to become solid, crystallized there over their heads. They sat down for a while to rest. ("This is a likely place," said the great hunter. "Yes, yes," said all his men. And so they rested there.)

From this dark part of the woods they went into a lighter place, where the trees were large and well apart. Corley walked to the right until they hit the path again. The path went straight ahead and Jim could see, beyond Corley's head, an opening in the trees. Through it the sunlight streamed. As they walked into it, a fly doctor whirled out of a bush, directly past Jim's face, then poised above his head in the sun's glare. Then it shot away and up and out. Jim watched it until his eyes hurt, then looked down.

They were again, as the night before, on a high bank. Below them the creek rushed in a wide sparkling rapids. Across the creek, against the blue sky, the woods seemed very green. There was a multitude of sounds shifting . . . a bird's cry, the rushing of the water, a wasp's buzz, and the far away, alien sound of an automobile. But each seemed only an echo in a silent place. The sun on the water made a blinding light.

Corley worked his way down the bank, then Jim threw the fishing poles after him and followed. An old log jugged up out of the sand, like the head of a floundering animal. It made a good place for their boxes and tackle. Jim arranged these things carefully on it, then sat down on the sand. Corley leaned up against the log and fixed the string on the poles and on his

reel. He set the reel in its notch on the casting rod, set the lure, then went down to the water, swinging his arm in practise for a cast. Jim stretched out on the sand and watched him as he went away down the narrow bar, then waded out into the rapid-flowing water. He waded cautiously, groaning and making faces every time he set his feet down on the sharp rocks. He stopped half-way to the middle of the stream and stood there with the water tearing past him, snapped his wrist back, the rod snapped back, the wrist and rod snapped forward and the brightly colored lure went flying out over the water. Jim began to doze. He was almost asleep when Corley called.

"Put a grub on the hook and set the pole out."

The sound came from a long distance, but it was firm, a command. Jim worked a long time trying to get the disgusting, pus-colored worm onto the hook. The hook cut his fingers and the worm wriggled and at the end there was nothing on the hook but a glob of flesh, colored red. But he took the pole to the water and stuck it into the sand and watched the mangled worm disappear, then watched the cork floating and dunking and floating. After a while Corley called again and made him see if the bait was still on the hook. It was not. He had to do the whole thing all over again. Then, as directed, he moved the pole so that the string hung down in a shadow that the log made.

After they had eaten their lunch and lay resting on the sand, Corley started to talk about casting and baits. He got out the box of trout lures and displayed them. Then he showed off the casting rod and reel. He stood up and made Jim stand up. He put his arms around him, grasping his wrists, and showed him the graceful movement of a cast; how his wrist should come slowly back, making a wide arc with the rod, then the lightning movement forward, the flight of the lure and the snaking of the string, and the plop of the lure in exactly the right spot. The whirr of the reel had to be even, sure, like the sound of a rattler. Corley showed him these things, then took the rod and went away to cast for himself. In a while he came back cursing, "God A'Mighty, not a strike!" and gave him other lessons. It was

well into the afternoon when he put the rod down on the log, took a fishing pole and the can of grub worms and waded the rapids to the other side of the creek.

Jim stared at the rod a long time. When he finally approached it, he was shy, as if it were too strange a thing and too important for his small hands. First he just held it in his hands and looked at it, at the shining rod and the reel mechanism that he could not understand at all. Then he flexed his wrist and watched the tip of the rod sway. The feathers of the lure blew in the wind. He swung the rod quickly back and forward and the lure flew out and dropped on the sand. Corley yelled.

"Keep your thumb on the spool!"

He blushed and reeled the lure back up. After that he remembered to keep his thumb against the spool to keep it from unwinding. Gradually he made a wider and wider arc with the tip end of the rod. He snapped his wrist smartly back. He walked up and down the little beach, trying to copy Corley's walk and Corley's arm swing. One time his thumb slipped, the lure flew out, the string snaked and plop! . . . a very small sound. But it made him tremble.

"You're jerking the damn thing."

Corley's voice . . . but still, even when he tried hard not to jerk as the lure flew out, it would not land right. He was worrying about this, the lure had just dropped in the wrong place in the center of the rapids, when it happened. His thumb was on the spool. There was a tremendous pull. The rod jumped out of his hand and there it was in the air, falling.

"Eeeeeee . . . git it, git it, git it!"

As he jumped for the rod he had a glimpse of Corley bouncing up and down on the opposite bank, his tow hair flying, his arms waving like a scarecrow's in a wind. It made him angry. The rod was flying toward the water, the spool whirring and whirring. Then he grabbed it and stopped the reel and there was another jerk and he was pulled into the water.

From then on he followed directions. The water numbed his legs. The sharp rocks cut his feet. He thought of these things

and followed the directions, "Play it out . . . easy, God A'Mighty, easy . . . she's a whopper, a whopper. . . . Don't jerk! . . . keep the string tight . . . I bet she's a five pounder . . . reel in . . . reel in . . . easy. . . ." The voice came across the shining water and into his head and his muscles reacted. He didn't think about it at all.

His feet thawed quickly on the warm sand. His arms hung limp and aching at his sides. He was very tired. Corley came rushing, jumping through the rapids, yelling, just yelling. When he came up on the sand he stopped suddenly and looked down at the trout, reverently quiet. In the sun the trout was a beautiful thing. Once in a while its tail waved up and the motion went through its whole body, like a ripple in a pool. Corley picked it up. Jim put the rod down carefully on the sand.

"God A'Mighty, you caught a fish!"

Then, for the first time, he realized his own connection with the fish's death.

His father grinned and grinned. Corley told the story breathlessly, all the time hopping from one foot to the other with the excitement of it. Mrs. Daigre spread the trout out on the hall table and measured it with a tape. Mr. Daigre said, "Foot and a half or damn near it, I bet!" He put his arm around Jim and they all stood looking at the fish. Its gills were still feebly working. Corley started the whole story over again and Jim listened and it became stranger with every word. Then Mr. Daigre took the three of them to the car and drove to Mr. Ed's store to weigh the trout. There his father told the story and it grew and was stranger still. There in the dim light, in the smells of beer and candy and flour and nails, it was a gigantic story, out of a fairy time. It had not happened to him at all. He had done nothing . . . he had killed a fish. He walked over to the dark corner where the stove was and stood there. It was quieter.

At last the excitement began to wear. The words came slower with so much re-telling. The trout's gills no longer sucked for air.

"Want some candy, boys? Give them what they want, Mr. Ed."

Corley asked for a Baby Ruth. Jim walked along the dark showcases and looked for something special. Mr. Ed turned on the light. Immediately Jim saw what he wanted. Mr. Ed's hand went in the case and caught up five cakes and brought them out.

"I don't want but one."

One cake came into his hand. He walked with it to the light over the open door. A man came in the door and he heard his father speak to him and begin the story again. He looked down at the cake. It was brown, perfectly round, and it would be very crisp. But it wasn't like any other crisp, brown cake in the world. All over the top of it there were pinpoints of color. Red, yellow, orange, green . . . every color, infinitesimal drops of tasteless candy. They made a beautiful sight. He looked at them, at the wonderful color of them, and thought of the color of the fish.

". . . twelve years old and damn if he didn't bring her in all by himself. . . ."

The store was crowded by the words, by the endless story.

He stepped quickly into the gay circus-world of the cookie top.

by William B. Bracke

PROMOTION

THE telephone bell rang. Carole went to answer it.
"Hello, Carole, this is Rex. Well, it came today."

"Oh, darling, how wonderful. Up to first?"

"Well, yes, you don't usually jump grades, you know."

"It's just wonderful. I'm so thrilled."

"Would you like to come out here for dinner tonight?"

"Of course I would, darling."

"Well, meet me at the club at six and we'll have a drink before dinner."

"Okay, darling."

"Bye."

"Bye now."

At five minutes after six Carole walked into the officers' club and glanced swiftly to the corner where she was sure Rex would be. He rose as she came near and made a vague motion of helping her into her chair.

"Oh, you've already got the silver ones on."

"Yes, when the major saw the orders come through, he sent down to the PX and bought a pair of them for me."

"That's good luck, isn't it, darling?"

"Yes, you're not supposed to buy your own."

"Darling, I'm so thrilled." After a moment she added, "I'm sorry I was a little late. Those buses are so crowded now."

"Doesn't matter. Do you want soda with your Scotch?"

When he returned with her drink, she said, "Maybe the next ones won't take so long in coming."

He eyed her briefly over the top of his glass while drinking.

"There's no way exactly to speed them up, you know."

"Of course, I know, darling. If you wouldn't mind, I'd like one of those little packages of cashews with my drink."

While he walked to the bar, she watched his shoulders. They weren't quite so sharp and erect as they had been when he finished at O. C. S.

"Thanks, darling," she said as he sat down again.

They were silent a moment. She smiled a trifle too brightly.

"That hunk of silver is about the best looking piece of costume jewelry I ever saw."

"Even if it did take over ten months to rate?"

"Well, darling, there are so many officers that—"

"So many second lieutenants, you mean."

"I was reading that article about officers the other day, and even Eisenhower began there."

"Yes, another war ago, but he didn't end there."

"Well, he's lots older than you, and he's been in the army all the time in between, hasn't he?"

"Okay, let's skip it."

He poured another jiggerful of Scotch into the melting contents of his glass. A somewhat paunchy captain passed their table, smiled, gripped one of Rex's shoulders, and said, "Congratulations, Simpson."

"Thanks, captain."

"Don't bother to get up. How are you, Mrs. Simpson?"

The captain moved off.

They sat in silence again.

"You'll be wearing those in no time at all, Rex. I know it."

"Okay. I said let's skip it. The war isn't going to last forever, you know."

"Well, I didn't suppose it would." Presently she said, "I told Mrs. Fuller this afternoon and she said it should have come through ages ago."

"Oh, did she? Bridge again this afternoon?"

"Yes, for a while. Mrs. Fuller had a foursome at their apartment. You know, Rex, it's terribly attractive."

"Lieutenant-colonels can afford to rent better apartments than

a made-over utility on the second floor." He half-smiled. "Passing of the second floor back."

"That's not very funny, darling. Maude Fuller said they sometimes thought they had their best times when the colonel was just beginning, when he was only a lieutenant."

"Before they got so busy patronizing the inferior grades?"

"No, of course not. But now the colonel has so much staff work and everything and he's away so much that sometimes they don't even see each other for days."

"Do you think that might be rather a relief?"

She hesitated a second in answering.

"Maybe it would. May I have another drink please?"

She watched him as he approached the bar. Quickly she dusted her nose with a miniscule powder puff.

"Thanks, darling," she said brightly when he returned with two set-ups and added a jiggerful of Scotch to each. "Vera called today and asked if we wanted to join them for the dance on Saturday. John has a bottle of something special in rum, she said."

"Oh, God, another of those damned black headaches all day Sunday then."

"We don't have to. I was only suggesting it."

"Okay, we'll see."

Carefully they watched a couple come into the club and move toward the bar. Over a deep tan the girl had a pile of swept-up blonde hair.

"Every time I see her, that hair gets lighter and lighter," Carole said.

"Men like that kind of hair."

Carole arrested her hand midway to her own brown hair.

"Yes, I suppose they must. So many women do it."

They watched a colored boy move noiselessly about picking up beer bottles and empty glasses.

"You mustn't say anything about it yet, but we were right about Vera. She is going to have a baby."

"Oh, God, here we go again."

"No, we're not going to go again," she said sharply.

Rex added another jiggerful of Scotch to his drink. A flight officer approached the juke box, pressed a nickel into the slot, and punched a number. Presently a sharp click of the needle striking the record sounded, and the diapason of "Don't Get Around Much Any More" filled the too-small room.

Carole's hand reached halfway across the table.

"Don't you think you've had about enough to drink, dear?"

"My God, I'm not tight. I'm not even feeling good. I've waited long enough for this promotion. I should be able to celebrate a little, I should think, if you can call this celebrating."

Carole waved to the Warrens as they moved from the bar toward the outer door.

"Let's go over to the mess hall with the Warrens."

"I'm not ready to eat yet. Besides, a first lieutenant mustn't be seen too much with a flight officer."

She looked at him a moment.

"Are you serious?"

"Am I serious? Not necessarily, but a person does have to watch a lot of things in the army."

"Well, then, let's join the Fullers. I just saw them come in and go to the bar."

"And have him think I'm brown-nosing for another promotion? Or maybe fawning because of this one? If I don't deserve a promotion, I don't want one. Even if you do play bridge with his wife."

"Ye gods, Rex, I play bridge with her because she's a good contract player. She suggests most of the foursomes anyway."

His hand reached toward the Scotch.

"Rex, you've had enough."

"For God's sake, stop nagging."

The juke box was silent again.

"Please, Rex, don't make a scene."

"Oh, God, you and your appearances. You couldn't wait until I got this promotion. You couldn't stop your oh, so subtle hints

about it for the last six months. Well, I got it and I don't give a good God damn."

She rose from the table and stood there for a moment.

"Are you going over to dinner now?" she asked.

"I don't feel hungry."

"Neither do I."

She turned and walked toward the door. Studiously he watched her feet and ankles and then poured himself another jiggerful of Scotch.

IN STRANGE EVENTS

If the moon set, and all the stars, and still no morning came, or
If the wise few books turned changeling on the shelf, or
If the dirty-minded enemy in such numbers came
That parleying (god forbid) seemed prudent,
Where would I then turn, oh, where would I turn then?

Men have burned hotter than stars for a lasting name, and
The books of memory are nowadays rainy-faint, and
Only the hatred of the dirty-minded enemy, only
This one face of the spinning god I always own
(Friends can die and worse, and)
Remains white-hot and clear, so
I'd keep my very hate of this, if this or this, or
This were to come, were to come suddenly now.

by William Meredith

A METAPHYSICAL SONNET

More concert than the quick have, have the dead
Whose centripetal journeys are as one,
While we yearn to the several quarters of the sun
And the moon besides, and the stars, are in our heads.

And how do we follow whither we are led?
Not like the dead, whom gravity alone
Moves as a unit, heart and hand and tongue
But partially, now this now that ahead:
Against the thing not willed, the act is done,
Against the thing undone, the words are said.

This is a stuff that cannot come to rest
For it owns ties to heaven and to the ground;
While there are achings in the lodestone flesh
Still will the quick move out and the dead move down.

by William Meredith

AND THEN THE WOMAN SPOKE

You who have the sun's great head,
You whom love hath never bled,
Our carcasses, where have they fed?

The classic armatures you shed
Showed me but your muscled heart,
You whom love hath never bled.

You etched upon my mortal shred
The brilliance of your violent art,
You who have the sun's great head

And prize the writings of the dead,
The scrolls, and Ptolemy's great chart;
You whom love hath never bled.

Yet crazed in that besodden bed,
We drank the spoilage of the heart;
You who have the sun's great head,
Our carcasses, where have they fed?

by Joseph D. Bennett

PURPLE SHELLFISH

Pericles, Prince of Tyre,
Glittered on the sands.
Snail-purple, crossed with fire,
Stained him with its brands

And burnt him where he naked
Lay in setting flame,
The striking sun which baked
His glazen blood and frame.

Razorbacks and wings
Fill the sparkling sea;
Swordfins whirl and spring
Among the sails, and free

Swings the purple shell
Weighing through the tide
Its bloody, maw-crammed cell.
The sun, bleeding in his pride,

Skins his prey upon the beach,
Dives, and whirls his cart
To eat within his raving bleach
The massy reddened heart.

by Joseph D. Bennett

ANCESTRAL THEME

Call no man happy till he is dead

I

The cool tinkle of bells on a longer April evening
One speck of star seen through the last eye of night
The morning fastness with opaque veins of a new grape leaf,
And all the space between, the vague before the mountainous
after:

For in seven days, he said, washed fronds for a Sunday of Palms
A long lived custom in Assisi, in Staines and in Richmond
With the single word of passion edging between lush
Cavernous walls, as a child's red pin wheel
Cuts a bleeding, flowing groove when he chases air along the
street.

That word again, the turmoil of its meaning—
Submission of silent will, justification for a general surge,
A question high vowels do not seem to answer.

II

A sharper cut, boring a hole to find the caveman's drawings,
With only this answer: The few words told about Uncle Nathan,
And Uncle Ben who could play his violin like no one else;
For a child seventy years after they were romantic.
Nathan and Ben (Their father read into the unknown,
After sorghum and spoonbread with an early fire,
The stories of Job, the surrounding false army, Samson's hair;
Those years, when the eyes would close against the hard seat,
Gave time for the hates and loves and codes to be read
Through long whiskers, slowly when diphtheria struck the house
Or reverently during a Calvin passiontide, a Christmas Eve)
Their names alone show this—the slow coolness of a generation's
bake.

III

The recurrent theme—of Nathan riding in town and counties
Through broken farm sites and a former grove, bringing the latest
News. Courier for Beauregard. And he had what Aristotle called
A good horse, but more like a wind worn carving
Or the horse fighting for the upper frieze
With wings outspread, the rider's breastplate carved with miracles;
Still able to ask the way or remember his dreams as a child,
He did not depend on two stars for a celestial plotted path—
One morning the sky would be a void, frozen icicles of a flood;
For Nathan with sword, polished buttons, and bridle calloused
hands,

Albion Castle at a hundred miles was days away,
And like the years, carried in telling, a glory,
A back-to-the-fire warmth. Can the word of passion
In a dream destroy all that—the groove losing its notches
And polished sides, or perhaps too firm for an opening?

IV

Nathan who lived to be older, yet remembered as courier,
Courier for Beauregard, an echo over the low ground,
With Nell shot in the rump fording the creek;
Can Nathan be seen coming this way?
Not a passionate ending—consumption brought on
With the winter miles of wandering wingless and horseless—
The last days spent in the four-poster bed,
Buried in the family plot of a farm no longer known
A field for rich long leaf tobacco, shouts of children
Building castles and horses under the apple trees;
All passion for love or seeing again
The midnight dark covered bird is lost in running cedar.

by Edward McGehee

THE ORACLE OF FLIGHT

"Your death is but a peece of the
world's order, and but a parcell of
the world's life."

I. *Christianborg Coast*

An old woman's tired thin arms
Make the half, the wild circles
Against the sand with a finger's brush.
The arms joined in calico rags of sage—
Through the looms fantastic plans weave and dye
Elephants, lions, monkeys perched in bamboo trees,
The stilts of huts in Limbo after the hurricane:
All find their way into the gentleman's swivel chair
Journey spanned by bolts on a shelf—
In a slight swirl with wind from the tide.

There the arms go, like the wandering in a tortoise's legs,
To pick up dry, long empty coconut shells—
Heartlessly broken, cracked with a knife,
Speared. A crazy but calm mind.
With a shrug each boy turned an index finger
Against his own temple and pointed at the rhythm
Of arms and rags. Distorted, but no more than one pine on a
crag,
Through the years without seasons, no evil winters,
But not by the disc that cast curved sabres—
The trees themselves in a clatter of armour
Or the swinging of a lantern in a darkened room.

Shells, perhaps, for a fire to touch the inner lines
And creases where full streams flow, anger
Grows eloquent, deep-sprung tides change

While moons wane without a glimpse.
Rather by stories of how strange ships came,
The clank of irons, moisture and cold smells
Created within man-thick walls of a sea-land fortification;
How black canoes were empty on the beach
No village spewing forth from all its sides
To draw in the nets, blue and silver with scales,
Through the breakers, demanding shares.

And then a child sent out to wander,
As a drop of blood courses through generations,
To escape a sea-borne pestilence;
Only to meet something stranger within the palms;
Any maternal hope. A last resort for her own sadness.
Let the child go, find its own way. Better on the plain
Where *our* tree grows against red ant hills
Than in my arms. The pity wrapped in a crown of seaweed.

Something from this past lingers in the motions
Of her arms. Cast out from the village;
In age you go unknown, old, alone—
But the village chieftain said—alone, or find your city left
For old women. And from them cast out. Arm from arm.
Alone now, and with eyes that cross our blank horizon,
With arms that seem to touch the ice in the polar sea;
Knowledge of waves, rising, being driven in,
The final sweep before the moon's change.

II. *Swans Turn White in Their Second Year*

Strange calls. How can one man know
From the distant sweep of birds' wings—not herons,
Cranes, hawks or falcons? Perhaps a raven
Dashing between the columns, the wings still
During the glide, then beating furiously on the inner curve;
The second, the third, the day long trial.
Even if unsure of their variety—no latent "Sweeney

The Mad" who knew his skylarks, woodcocks and turtle doves—
They flew against the inner garden
(High walls, broken glass, the padlocked gate.
In the centre he saw the burning oak and unconsumed
Top-branch nest, blood on the ground from the bougainvilleas,
His eyes touched with night jasmine; birds that devoured
The corn Adam remembered for the pathway
Allowed him one glimpse of fountains, oleanders and olive trees.
We forget a house because of its haunted deeds;
'The gateway for the public garden reads 'Closed for the Day.'
Casting shadows, the sun cleaned walls;
Birds with their sounds' of love and plumage set in the glaze,
And hills rise up made of sand, where ravens were kind.

III. *Seasons for Sorrow*

With a mad old woman and birds—
When centuries have no meaning, no time for a day—
Birds whose names and calls could not be known,
Who could listen in a sedate concert hall
To a viol, violin, 'cello, and then together?
That used to be their dance music
Some hidden voice at your elbow tells in confirmation.
Hear the music with a clear mind, when birds are more
Than ornaments in a garden—cast iron stags and swans—
And have arms go outland and up, then under.
Yes, you reply. Their music danced from court
Through farms, a strong meadow-chain, an inn
Sunken in ruins left from Cornwall, or a party on the downs.

We heard that tune only after my last voyage—
Low shores of the Carolinas, misty toadstool hills,
Jamaica, violent red peaks thrown out of the inner
Earth where birds of passage settled on my shoulders,
And finally the coasts of the under side.
Used to biscuits, rum, the smooth oak masts and riggings.
We had one woman who sent her child to wander on the plain.

To escape. This is the joy of being home—talk, real memories,
No curse of witchcraft to touch you in the dead of night,
No icicles growing in your beard as you watch a colder sea.
A silence in the cellar—no cries from the hold—
The woman's wail that seemed to be a bird's.
Such are the ills that follow a fated path.

Get out your fiddle; add a horn there for merriness,
And find the harp that hangs with cobwebs on the attic wall.
Wash, wash out the dip of the sea
And bring on the sound that has some unheard harmony—
Not a cuckoo, nightingale, jay, or 'cello. Could swallows
Migrate to the moon, from there cast shadows on the shore
For arms, birds in a desert sanctuary,
And moans that creaked the pitched sides
When the palms and real castle were gone?
Try to wipe out the sorrow within my bones.

by Edward McGehee

A MESSAGE FOR HOME

Moses moved into a northern wind
Each step lengthening the number and pattern of sandv holes
To be brushed under foot, not overgrown; at home
The pines and water oaks and trumpet vines
Would have taken their places before a later traveler.

But our father, the older spoke for the two,
Came from Lebanon; the cool, crisp branches
Crushed against single stones, not far
From the ancient sailors, the blood-smeared sword,
Where the skies could be endless gardens of deep forget-me-nots.
And Mother was from across the hills—back,
Far from the steady heat, the death-blue necklace
Rolling against the dancer's filagreed breasts. Yet
Together they watched Canopus, because those of the hills
And tides cannot forget, on the southern edge;
Orion, at eight, high as the last tip-end of the world,
They measured their way into the past, only part of the way,
The backward path, the sand unfolding
Into rocks and dunes and a sand-mist sky.

A hard path.

A difficult decision to leave their parents,
The younger children, and no chance for recent news.
Another future family moving into narrow streets
With flowers waiting against the alleyways—scarlet
Pimpernels, corn marigolds, and desert honesty:
Flowers were brought in from the low green fields
(A short life, but a long scent in a family room),
But the birds were left to the long, flat skies,
Siskins and pipits going north were passed
On the way. Yet all of it was into this: into the past

Into the present. The green star of a cold night
Could not be lost anymore than the mosaics
Cleo wore at the time her matured emotions
Were placed against the gods—with musk and sandle-
Wood woven into the hems of her robes.

It is all quite true.

The past uncovers itself in many ways—archaeologists
Deep within the limestone caverns, a lame mother
Saying her prayers on olive seeds,
The words of Shakespeare read in an empty, save for one, long
room,
A simple map that gave dates for their wanderings;
'One night there—the sunken ground where our first
Child was conceived. . . . A week, there, to let the storm go by.'

Can you see my brother's face? He was born
Long after the journey, perhaps the past was loved into his bones.
What was the need, I thought, for him to touch the jaw,
Move into the sunlight the skin polished like a kiss-worn stone.
When his eyes were as clear and strange
As the brown sea pebble, tinted with coral, found
On the palm lined shores? Blue cannot be the single colour,
With all its variations, to stand for love.

Not in the smile and joyful pride
Could the vibrations of the past be mistaken.
Triangular white sails that make a river known.
Its origin in a land of jewels—that is what
The ancient chronicler believed and recited
Before his own court's throne. The spirit of Moses
Strong in hope, and the mystic creations of David
With his lyre and memorable songs.

And, yet, can this be true.
For who told me, and where did I come to believe

That both men died ages ago, before our families
Traced their paths, by way of the matted trees and vines,
Through the Carolinas, the red hills of Clayton,
And Virginia, to Drogheda and a Bristol fair?

We sang no songs, no steps were danced,
And for the length of time few words were spoken.
But silently Orion and the moon have lasted for generations.
'My brother's face.' Could these words of praise
Rise suddenly out of the past?
Or, was it David himself deep in the dusk?

Perhaps some fates outlast the local gods
Add words and music for a fireside back at home
Where the ancient stars are known: the old and to be
Generations are lost from view in the windblown path to the
south.
It is time now for the moon and a bird's far cry.

by Edward McGehee

WHERE FRIENDS HAVE PARTED

I

PROPAGANDA

Where friends have parted lies remain to heap
above the spot's segmented pain the dunes
that shift, the patterned waves, the bitter keep
of sand. All this is death above the runes
upon the conscript heart. O who will read—
should time and wind sweep clear this trail—the pale
abstractions of a sense and hate, decreed
and lost by stars above the heart's detail.
Into the paralyzing dune of race
(upon the mind and stopping mouth it rolls)
men follow objects and the light. No place
receives love; hope becomes the well of tolls.
Such will obliterate us, and our lands
will be the arid fields of loveless hands.

II

THE NIGHT IS CLEAR

The night is clear and, somewhere on the fringe
of known geography, brings death to men
in cities and the watered plains where hinge
the centuries and fame. Within the ken
of reason and the human frame no year
has made of man the mockery, insane
and sightless, that a starlight night and fear
and hates will drag as jester in their train.
The heart perverted and the mind unset
now make a carnival by night: Tableaux
infernal, floats of cities bombed, and yet
the plague to come. Cry Hail! O tongue brought low.
For all the masked, the pilloried, the slain
pour fog as wine; nostalgic moons are pain.

III

CATHEDRAL

Cathedral, treasureless and stricken vault,
behold a congregation, gathered in
beneath these arching centuries, assault
your God and history, as under sin
and treason flesh lies broken. Now the veins
confess through wounds to bandages and hands
of nurses to their gross and sanguine pains
while eyes turn up to where an altar stands.
Let now your centuries have meaning for
the mind entrapped in days; renew the warm
and tender movements of the heart. And more:
sustain the trust of one before the swarm.
For life—the prostrate in the straw—time kneels
in you, itself at Mass, and breaks its seals.

IV

RETURN

Returned from agony of shrilling steel
and robber flame, his figure falls upon
the land that bore and sold him with the feel
of righteous trade. And, hired to frenzy, sun
and stars alone can state his vacant creed
of lovelessness. So beaten by the hate
of wills upon the anvil-earth, the deed
of thought now loses shape and falls to fate.
In shattered mind the wind replaces tears
with leaves and blowing smoke of brush afire.
This is our lover in the after-years—
with sanity in season, not clear fire.
Now what of time and dear, complacent art
to set a trust in mind, sharp love in heart?

V

FOR THE ARDENT DEAD

Can tears of ink—a letting of mind's blood—
reveal the heart's swift loss: O what a psalm
is in the veins, the lyric pulse, the blood
impounded to an end. But temple calm—
a psalm's necessity—the teaching hour,
that radiant upsurge of voice in bright
renewal: what are these to brutal hour,
the self-denying and the freezing blight?
Dear stranger now to voice, transfixed and dead,
with psalms of life unraised, congealed in vein:
'To this caught heart the veins repeat; in head
a mind weighs all of faith and trial's gain.
There are not left unwritten things of note,
warm things in hope and tears—beyond the quote.

by Howard Carroll

PICNIC AFTERMATH

The dark smashes on the far garden wall;
Restores by repercussion the prestige
Lost in a moment of false dawn; splinters
In a thousand entrances and exits.
And a thousand gray-sleeved janitors, so proud
And ignorant, sweep out the drooping fragments
With the other debris of spent hearths and hours.

Away from the sun, a secret ember flings
Its caution to the winds; explosively
Salutes the common precedence of life
With the supreme tribute; and, dying, pays
The only mortal price of recognition.
An episode is ended. Older sparks,
Immovable in distance, witnessed too.

A lover's query by the ancient rocks,
Left in the company of ruthless eddies,
Is monumented by the blackened logs,
Washed by the rising waves untenderly,
Reflected falsely by the morning star.
Unsentimental in its hermit sphere,
This last observer leaves no epitaph.

Their rendezvous was swept by wind and spray;
Their fire was built on earth; so was their love
Purified in the elements it mirrored,
Shared by the life it sought to element,
Erased by the elements which fostered it.
And the remnant crumbs and embers hide by night,
Enrich the dark, and scatter through the day.

by Bernard Heringman

GERSHOM

"I have been a stranger in a strange land."

And I, Beebe, longing have led the way;
Have lunged deep inside my iron core
And found Nowhere, rudely inhabited
With staring eyes of strange beasts clustered thick,
Untouchables in calm centres of whirlpools,
Fixed by mutual curiosity.

Avails a moment the clean surface air,
And the compressed air of my later chamber
Postpones internal buckling and collapse.
The dank blackness inbetween distracts
With horrible consolation of incubi.

My globe has a one-way window and no mirror.
The waters whisper around me, but the fish
Remain aloof, congealed in helixes.
And as I press to them in closing circles,
Cold eyes and bodies only deign to pose
For my research, within their eddies fixed
As in the record of my camera.

How they stare, with crusted lips concealed!

Ballasted down, windlassed up before—
Now the rope, too, fails my urgency;
And I am inbetween, alone in dank
Blackness, eternity of inbetween
Now, with bubbles rising at my lips.

by Bernard Heringman

THREE PEOPLE DIED

To bed! to bed!
The watchman said,
And as he cried
Three people died.

Two lovers came at his command,
Bequeathing the affairs at hand
To deaf, gray denizens of rooms
Steeped in mortuary fumes
Of faded tea and fading air;
Close-shuttered to preserve the lair
Of populated vacancy.

The night-walker trails his revery:
To bed! to bed!

Two lovers hearkened to his call;
Heedless of impending pall,
Heedless of maternal ache,
Heedless of hearts; in his wake
They panted, heedless. . . . The gray house
Holds a whimpering gray mouse,
Whose drawn-lipped tooting at the slats
Wears thin herself, and only fats
The shutter with her desperate blood.

Meanwhile the echoes' hovering flood:
To bed! to bed!

Two lovers closed their eyes and kissed
Within the shroud of moonlit mist
Of night, the watchman's province; turned
And kissed the very night and learned
The pillow of its white embrace. . . .
A mouse in anguish whets her face
Once; crumples, coughs, and no more feels
The fading footsteps or the peals:

To bed! to bed!
The watchman said.
And as he cried,
Three people died.

by Bernard Heringman

IL PENSEROSETTO

Tell me what is in my eyes,
My friend; please tell me.
Do you spy a paradise?
Then you excel me;
Else my eyes and mind
Are alien neighbors;
War to keep me blind;
Frustrate my labors.

What I have, what I have seen,
Has left no seeming
Here; so must I turn and wean
On inward gleaming.
Am I to choose? I choose
Only mind-vision
To batten on; refuse
Only decision.

Say I am disgruntled then,
(Rightly-indignant)—
On earth's face a little wen,
But not malignant.
Do I disturb the peace?
My own peace only.
Do you demand surcease?
You must be lonely.

Tears of my complaint confess
To willful sorrow;
Show me all I may possess
Of you, nor borrow
Infection of your fears,
Nor lend corruption.
I keep close my tears
And fear disruption.

My eyes are rich, but innocent
In self-seclusion:
Should not my eyes justly resent
Your *kind* intrusion,
In their life, of Thing,
Shadow-abstraction?
Shadows within still sing
Pure satisfaction.

by Bernard Heringman

THE COUNTERVAILING

Being not what we were nor what we would be,
Hearing the music from another room,
Clutching at time that is not what it should be,
Amounts to limbo, grooves into a doom.
Thence shall the total piece-by-peace disbursement
Of the ambiguous self, fixation-weary,
Redound into release, or new enforcement,
When eyes can barely tell that they are bleary?
Post office blotters salvage more withal
Than the scant ghosted residue of these
Abstractions. Yet if lust beyond recall
Is so much waste now, shall our wastages
Not exercise the waste itself of lust
And leave us blood-purged—as a wound of thrust?

by William Michaux

by *Cleanth Brooks, Jr.*

HISTORY WITHOUT FOOTNOTES:¹

AN ACCOUNT OF KEATS' URN

THERE is much in the poetry of Keats which suggests that he would have approved of Archibald MacLeish's dictum, "A poem should not mean/But be." There is even some warrant for thinking that the Grecian urn (real or imagined) which inspired the famous ode was, for Keats, just such a poem, "palpable and mute," a poem in stone. Hence it is the more remarkable that the "Ode" itself differs from Keats' other odes by culminating in a statement—a statement even of some sententiousness in which the urn itself is made to say that beauty is truth, and—more sententious still—that this bit of wisdom sums up the whole of mortal knowledge.

This is "to mean" with a vengeance—to violate the doctrine of the objective correlative, not only by stating truths, but by defining the limits of truth. Small wonder that some critics have felt that the unravished bride of quietness protests too much.

T. S. Eliot, for example, says that "this line ["Beauty is truth" etc.] strikes me as a serious blemish on a beautiful poem; and the reason must be either that I fail to understand it, or that it is a statement which is untrue." But even for persons who

¹This essay had been finished some months before I came upon Kenneth Burke's brilliant essay on Keats' "Ode" ("Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats", *Accent*, Autumn, 1943). I have decided not to make any alterations, though I have been tempted to adopt some of Burke's insights, and, in at least one case, his essay has convinced me of a point which I had considered but rejected—the pun on "breed" and "Brede."

I am happy to find that two critics with methods and purposes so different should agree so thoroughly as we do on the poem. I am pleased, for my part, therefore, to acknowledge the amount of duplication which exists between the two essays, counting it as rather important corroboration of a view of the poem which will probably seem to some critics overingenious. In spite of the common elements, however, I feel that the emphasis of my essay is sufficiently different from Burke's to justify my going on with its publication.

feel that they do understand it, the line may still constitute a blemish. Middleton Murry, who, after a discussion of Keats' other poems and his letters, feels that he knows what Keats meant by "beauty" and what he meant by "truth," and that Keats used them in senses which allowed them to be bracketed properly together, still, is forced to conclude: "My own opinion concerning the value of these two lines *in the context of the poem itself* is not very different from Mr. T. S. Eliot's." The troubling assertion is apparently an intrusion upon the poem—does not grow out of it—is not dramatically accommodated to it.

This is essentially Garrod's objection, and the fact that Garrod does object indicates that a distaste for the ending of the "Ode" is by no means limited to critics of notoriously "modern" sympathies.

But the question of real importance is not whether Eliot, Murry, and Garrod are right in thinking that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" injures the poem. The question of real importance concerns beauty and truth in a much more general way: what is the relation of the beauty (the goodness, the perfection) of a poem to the truth or falsity of what it seems to assert? It is a question which has particularly vexed our own generation—to give it I. A. Richards' phrasing, it is the problem of belief.

The "Ode," by its bold equation of beauty and truth, raises this question in its sharpest form—the more so when it becomes apparent that the poem itself is obviously intended to be a parable on the nature of poetry, and of art in general. The "Ode" has apparently been an enigmatic parable, to be sure: one can emphasize *beauty* is truth and throw Keats into the pure-art camp, the usual procedure. But it is only fair to point out that one could stress *truth* is beauty, and argue with the Marxist critics of the 'thirties for a propaganda art. The very ambiguity of the statement, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" ought to warn us against insisting very much on the statement in isolation, and to drive us back to a consideration of the context in which the statement is set.

It will not be sufficient, however, if it merely drives us back

to a study of Keats' reading, his conversation, his letters. We shall not find our answer here even if scholarship does prefer on principle investigations of Browning's ironic question, "What porridge had John Keats." For even if we knew just what porridge he had, physical and mental, we should still not be able to settle the problem of the "Ode." The reason should be clear: our specific question is not what did Keats the man probably want to assert here about the relation of beauty and truth; it is rather: was Keats the poet able to exemplify that relation in this particular poem. Middleton Murry is right: the relation of the final statement in the poem to the total context is all-important.

Indeed, Eliot, in the very passage in which he attacks the "Ode," has indicated the general line which we are to take in its defense. In that passage, Eliot goes on to contrast the closing lines of the "Ode" with a line from *King Lear*, "Ripeness is all." Keats' lines strike him as false; Shakespeare's, on the other hand, as not clearly false, and as possibly quite true. Shakespeare's generalization, in other words, avoids raising the question of truth. But is it really a question of truth and falsity? One is tempted to account for the difference of effect which Eliot feels in this way: "Ripeness is all" is a statement put in the mouth of a dramatic character and a statement which is governed and qualified by the whole context of the play. It does not directly challenge an examination into its truth because its relevance is pointed up and modified by the dramatic context.

Now, suppose that one could show that Keats' lines, *in quite the same way*, constitute a speech, a consciously riddling paradox, put in the mouth of a particular character, and modified by the total context of the poem. If we could demonstrate that the speech was "in character," was dramatically appropriate, was properly prepared for, then would not the lines have all the justification of "Ripeness is all"? In such case, should we not have waived the question of the scientific or philosophic truth of the lines in favor of the application of a principle curiously like that of dramatic propriety? Some of us are beginning to feel that this principle is the only one legitimately to be invoked in any case. Be this as

it may, "The Ode on a Grecian Urn" provides us with as neat an instance as one could wish in order to test some of the implications of such a manoeuvre.

It has seemed best to be perfectly frank⁷ about procedure: the poem is to be read in order to see whether the last lines of the poem are not, after all, dramatically prepared for. Yet there are some claims to be made upon the reader too, claims which he, for his part, will have to be prepared to honor. He must not be allowed to dismiss the early characterizations of the urn as merely so much vaguely beautiful description. He must not be too much surprised if "mere decoration" turns out to be meaningful symbolism—or if ironies develop where he has been taught to expect only sensuous pictures. Most of all, if the teasing riddle spoken finally by the urn is not to strike him as bewildering break in tone, he must not be too much disturbed to have the element of paradox latent in the poem emphasized, even in those parts of the poem which have none of the energetic crackle of wit with which he usually associates paradox. This is surely not too much to ask of the reader—namely to assume that Keats meant what he said and that he chose his words with care. After all, the poem begins on a note of paradox, though a mild one: for we ordinarily do not expect an urn to speak at all; and yet, Keats does more than this: he begins his poem by emphasizing the apparent contradiction.

The silence of the urn is stressed—it is a "bride of quietness;" it is the "foster-child of silence," but the urn is a "historian" too. Historians tell the truth, or are at least expected to tell the truth. What is a "sylvan historian?" A historian who is like the forest rustic, a woodlander? Or, a historian who writes histories of the forest? Presumably, the urn is sylvan in both senses. True, the latter meaning is uppermost; the urn can "express/A flowery tale more sweetly than our ryme," and what the urn goes on to express are tales of Tempe and the dales of Arcady. But the urn, like the "leaf-fring'd legend" which it tells, is covered with emblems of the fields and forests: "Overwrought/With forest branches and the trodden weed." When we consider the way in

which the urn utters its history, the fact that it must be sylvan in both senses is seen as inevitable. Perhaps, too, the fact that it is a rural historian, a rustic, a peasant historian, qualifies in our minds the dignity and the "truth" of the histories which it recites. Its histories, Keats has already conceded, may be characterized as "tales"—not formal history at all.

The sylvan historian certainly supplies no names and dates—"What men or gods are these?" the poet asks. What it does give is action—of men *or* gods, of godlike men or of super-human (though not daemonic) gods—action, which is not the less intense for all that the urn is cool marble. The words "mad" and "ecstasy" occur, but it is the quiet, rigid urn which gives the dynamic picture. And the paradox goes further: the scene is one of violent love-making, a Bacchanalian scene, but the urn itself is like a "still unravished bride," or like a child, a child "of silence and slow time." It is not merely like a child, but like a "foster-child." The exactness of the term can be defended. "Silence and slow time," it is suggested, are not the true parents, but foster-parents. They are too old, one feels, to have borne the child themselves. Moreover, they dote upon the "child" as grandparents do. The urn is fresh and unblemished; it is still young, for all its antiquity and time which destroys so much has "fostered" it.

With Stanza II we move into the world presented by the urn, into an examination, not of the urn as a whole—as an entity with its own form—but of the details which overlay it. But as we enter that world, the paradox of silent speech is carried on, this time in terms of the objects portrayed on the vase.

The first lines of the stanza state a rather bold paradox—even the dulling effect of many readings has hardly blunted it. At least we can easily revive its sharpness. Attended to with care, it is a statement which is preposterous, and yet true—true on the same level on which the original metaphor of the speaking urn is true. The unheard music is sweeter than any audible music. The poet has rather cunningly enforced his conceit by using the phrase, "Ye soft pipes." Actually, we might accept the poet's

metaphor without being forced to accept the adjective "soft." The pipes might, although unheard, be shrill, just as the action which is frozen in the figures on the urn can be violent and ecstatic as in Stanza I and slow and dignified as in Stanza IV (the procession to the sacrifice). Yet, by characterizing the pipes as "soft," the poet provides a sort of realistic basis for his metaphor: the pipes, it is suggested, are playing very softly; if we listen carefully, we can hear them; their music is just below the threshold of normal sound.

This general paradox runs through the stanza: action goes on though the actors are motionless; the song will not cease; the lover cannot leave his song; the maiden, always to be kissed, never actually kissed, will remain changelessly beautiful. The maiden is, indeed, like the urn itself, a "still unravished bride of quietness"—not even ravished by a kiss; and it is implied, perhaps, that her changeless beauty, like that of the urn, springs from this fact.

The poet is obviously stressing the fresh, unwearied charm of the scene itself which can defy time and is deathless. But, at the same time, the poet is being perfectly fair to the terms of his metaphor. The beauty portrayed is deathless because it is lifeless. And it would be possible to shift the tone easily and ever so slightly by insisting more heavily on some of the phrasing so as to give them a darker implication. Thus, in the case of "thou canst not leave/Thy song," one could interpret: he cannot leave the song even if he would: he is fettered to it, a prisoner. In the same way, one could enlarge on the hint that the lover is not wholly satisfied and content: "never canst thou kiss,/ . . . yet do not grieve." These items are mentioned here, not because one wishes to maintain that the poet is bitterly ironical, but because it is important for us to see that even here the paradox is being used fairly, particularly in view of the shift in tone which comes in the next stanza.

This third stanza represents, as various critics have pointed out, a recapitulation of earlier motifs. The boughs which cannot shed their leaves, the unwearied melodist, and the ever-ardent

lover reappear. Indeed, I am not sure that this stanza can altogether be defended against the charge that it represents a falling-off from the delicate but firm precision of the earlier stanzas. There is a tendency to linger over the scene sentimentally: the repetition of the word "happy" is perhaps symptomatic of what is occurring. Here, if anywhere, in my opinion, is to be found the blemish on the ode—not in the last two lines. Yet, if we are to attempt a defense of the third stanza, we shall come nearest success by emphasizing the paradoxical implications of the repeated items; for whatever development there is in the stanza inheres in the increased stress on the paradoxical element. For example, the boughs cannot "bid the Spring adieu," a phrase which repeats "nor ever can those trees be bare," but the new line strengthens the implications of speaking: the falling leaves are a gesture, a word of farewell to the joy of spring. The melodist of Stanza II played sweeter music because unheard, but here, in the third stanza, it is implied that he does not tire of his song for the same reason that the lover does not tire of his love—neither song nor love is consummated. The songs are "for ever new" because they cannot be completed.

The paradox is carried further in the case of the lover whose love is "For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd." We are really dealing with an ambiguity here, for we can take "still to be enjoy'd" as an adjectival phrase on the same level as "warm"—that is, "still virginal and warm." But the tenor of the whole poem suggests that the warmth of the love depends upon the fact that it has *not* been enjoyed—that is, "warm and still to be enjoy'd" may mean also "warm *because* still to be enjoy'd."

But though the poet has developed and extended his metaphors furthest here in this third stanza, the ironic counterpoise is developed furthest too. The love which a line earlier was "warm" and "panting" becomes suddenly in the next line, "All breathing human passion far above." But if it is *above* all breathing passion, it is, after all, outside the realm of breathing passion, and therefore, not human passion at all.

(If one argues that we are to take "All breathing human pas-

sion" as qualified by "That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd"—that is, if one argues that Keats is saying that the love depicted on the urn is above only that human passion which leaves one cloyed and not above human passion in general, he misses the point. For Keats in the "Ode" is stressing the ironic fact that all human passion *does* leave one cloyed; hence the superiority of art.)

The purpose in emphasizing the ironic undercurrent in the foregoing lines is not at all to disparage Keats—to point up implications of his poem of which he was himself unaware. Far from it: the poet knows precisely what he is doing. The point is to be made simply in order to make sure that we are completely aware of what he *is* doing. Garrod, sensing this ironic undercurrent, seems to interpret it as an element over which Keats was not able to exercise full control. He says: "Truth to his main theme [the fixity given by art to forms which in life are impermanent] has taken Keats farther than he meant to go. The pure and ideal art of this 'cold Pastoral,' this 'silent form,' *has* a cold silentness which in some degree saddens him. In the last lines of the fourth stanza, especially the last three lines . . . every reader is conscious, I should suppose, of an undertone of sadness, of disappointment." The undertone is there, but Keats has not been taken "farther than he meant to go." Keats' attitude, even in the early stanzas, is more complex than Garrod would allow: it is more complex and more ironic, and a recognition of this is important if we are to be able to relate the last stanza to the rest of the "Ode." Keats is perfectly aware that the frozen moment of loveliness is more dynamic than is the fluid world of reality only because it is frozen. The love depicted on the urn remains warm and young because it is not human flesh at all but cold, ancient marble.

With Stanza IV, we are still within the world depicted by the urn, but the scene presented in this stanza forms a contrast to the earlier scenes. It emphasizes, not individual aspiration and desire, but communal life. It constitutes another chapter in the history that the "sylvan historian" has to tell. And again, names

and dates have been omitted. We are not told to what god's altar the procession moves, nor the occasion of the sacrifice.

Moreover, the little town from which the celebrants come is unknown; and the poet rather goes out of his way to leave us the widest possible option in locating it. It may be a mountain town, or a river town, or a tiny seaport. Yet, of course, there is a sense in which the nature of the town—the essential character of the town—is actually suggested by the figured urn. This is not given explicitly. The poet is willing to leave much to our imaginations; and yet the stanza in its organization of imagery and rhythm does describe the town clearly enough; it is small, it is quiet, its people are knit together as an organic whole, and on a "pious morn" such as this, its whole population has turned out to take part in the ritual.

The stanza has been justly admired. Its magic of effect defies reduction to any formula. Yet, without pretending to "account" for the effect in any mechanical fashion, one can point to some of the elements active in securing the effect: there is the suggestiveness of the word "green" in green altar—something natural, spontaneous, living; there is the suggestion that the little town is caught in a curve of the seashore, or nestled in a fold of the mountains—at any rate, is something secluded and something naturally related to its terrain; there is the effect of the phrase "peaceful citadel," a phrase which involves a clash between the ideas of war and peace and resolves it in the sense of stability and independence without imperialistic ambition—the sense of stable repose.

But to return to the larger pattern of the poem: Keats does something in this fourth stanza which is highly interesting in itself and thoroughly relevant to the sense in which the urn is a historian. One of the most moving passages in the poem is that in which the poet speculates on the strange emptiness of the little town which, of course, has not been pictured on the urn at all.

The little town which has been merely implied by the procession portrayed on the urn is endowed with a poignance beyond any-

thing else in the poem. Its streets will "for evermore be silent," its desolation forever shrouded in a mystery. No one in the figured procession will ever be able to go back to the town to break the silence there, not even one to tell the stranger there why the town remains desolate.

If one attends closely to what Keats is doing here, he may easily come to feel that the poet is indulging himself in an ingenious fancy, an indulgence, however, which is gratuitous and finally silly; that is, the poet has created in his own imagination the town implied by the procession of worshippers, has given it a special character of desolation and loneliness, and then has gone on to treat it as if it were a real town to which a stranger might actually come and be puzzled by its emptiness. (I can see no other interpretation of the line, "and not a soul to tell/Why thou art desolate can ere return.") But, actually, of course, no one will ever discover the town except by the very same process by which Keats discovers it: namely, through the figured urn, and then, of course, he will not need to ask why it is empty. One can well imagine what a typical eighteenth-century critic would have made of this flaw in logic.

It will not be too difficult, however, to show that Keats' extension of the fancy is not irrelevant to the poem as a whole. The "reality" of the little town has a very close relation to the urn's character as a historian. If the earlier stanzas have been concerned with such paradoxes as the ability of static carving to convey dynamic action, of the soundless pipes to play music sweeter than that of the heard melody, of the figured lover to have a love more warm and panting than that of breathing flesh and blood, so in the same way the town implied by the urn comes to have a richer and more important history than that of actual cities. Indeed, the imagined town is to the figured procession as the unheard melody is to the carved pipes of the unwearied melodist. And the poet, by pretending to take the town as real—so real that he can imagine the effect of its silent streets upon the stranger who chances to come into it—has suggested in the most powerful way that he can its essential reality for him—and for us. It is a

case of the doctor's taking his own medicine: the poet is prepared to stand by the illusion of his own making.

With Stanza V we move out of the enchanted world portrayed by the urn to consider the urn itself once more as a whole, as an object. The shift in point of view is marked with the first line of the stanza by the apostrophe, "O Attic shape. . . ." It is the urn itself as a formed thing, as an autonomous world, to which the poet addresses these last words. And the rich, almost breathing world which the poet has conjured up for us contracts and hardens into the decorated motifs on the urn itself: "with brede/Of marble men and maidens over-wrought." The beings who have a life above life—"All breathing human passion far above"—are marble, after all.

This last is a matter which, of course, the poet has never denied. The recognition that the men and maidens are frozen, fixed, arrested, has, as we have already seen, run through the second, third, and fourth stanzas as an ironic undercurrent. The central paradox of the poem, thus, comes to conclusion in the phrase, "cold Pastoral." The word "pastoral" suggests warmth, spontaneity, the natural, and the informal as well as the idyllic, the simple, and the informally charming. What the urn tells is a "flowery tale," a "leaf-fring'd legend," but the "sylvan historian" works in terms of marble. The urn itself is cold, and the life beyond life which it expresses is life which has been formed, arranged. The urn itself is a "silent form," and it speaks, not by means of statement, but by "teasing us out of thought." It is as enigmatic as eternity is, for, like eternity, its history is beyond time, outside time, and for this very reason bewilders our time-ridden minds: it teases us.

The marble men and maidens of the urn will not age as flesh-and-blood men and women will: "When old age shall this generation waste." (The word "generation" by the way, is very rich. It means on one level "that which is generated"—that which springs from human loins—Adam's breed; and yet, so intimately is death wedded to men, the word "generation" itself has become, as here, a measure of time.) The marble men and women lie

outside time. The urn which they adorn will remain. The "sylvan historian" will recite its history to other generations.

What will it say to them? Presumably, what it says to the poet now: that "formed experience," imaginative insight, embodies the basic and fundamental perception of man and nature. The urn is beautiful, and yet its beauty is based—what else is the poem concerned with?—on an imaginative perception of essentials. Such a vision is beautiful but it is also true. The Sylvan historian presents us with beautiful histories, but they are true histories, and it is a good historian.

Moreover, the "truth" which the sylvan historian gives is the only kind of truth which we are likely to get on this earth, and, furthermore, it is the only kind that we *have* to have. The names, dates, and special circumstances, the wealth of data—these the sylvan historian quietly ignores. But we shall never get all the facts anyway—there is no end to the accumulation of facts. Moreover, mere accumulations of facts—a point our own generation is beginning to realize—are meaningless. The sylvan historian does better than that: it takes a few details and so orders them that we have not only beauty but insight into essential truth. Its "history," in short, is a history without footnotes. It has the validity of myth—not myth as a pretty but irrelevant make-belief, an idle fancy, but myth as a valid perception into reality.

So much for the "meaning" of the last lines of the "Ode." It is an interpretation which differs little from past interpretations. It is put forward here with no pretension to novelty. What is important is the fact that it can be derived from the context of the "Ode" itself.

And now, what of the objection that the final lines break the tone of the poem with a display of misplaced sententiousness? One can summarize the answer already implied thus: throughout the poem the poet has stressed the paradox of the speaking urn. First, the urn itself can tell a story, can give a history. Then, the various figures depicted upon the urn play music or speak or sing. If we have been alive to these items, we shall not, perhaps,

be too much surprised to have the urn speak once more, not in the sense in which it tells a story—a metaphor which is rather easy to accept—but, to have it speak on a higher level, to have it make a commentary on its own nature. If the urn has been properly dramatized, if we have followed the development of the metaphors, if we have been alive to the paradoxes which work throughout the poem, perhaps then, we shall be prepared for the enigmatic, final paradox which the “silent form” utters. But in that case, we shall not feel that the generalization, unqualified and to be taken literally, is meant to march out of its context to compete with the scientific and philosophical generalizations which dominate our world.

“Truth is beauty, beauty truth” has precisely the same status, and the same justification as Shakespeare’s “Ripeness is all.” It is a speech “in character” and supported by a dramatic context.

To conclude thus may seem to weight the principle of dramatic propriety with more that it can bear. This would not be fair to the complexity of the problem of truth in art, nor fair to Keats’ little parable. Granted; and yet the principle of dramatic propriety may take us farther than would first appear. Respect for it may at least insure our dealing with the problem of truth at the level on which it is really relevant to literature. If we can see that the assertions made in a poem are to be taken as part of an organic context, if we can resist the temptation to deal with them in isolation, then we may be willing to go on to deal with the world-view, or “philosophy,” or “truth” of the *poem as a whole* in terms of its dramatic wholeness: that is, we shall not neglect the maturity of attitude, the dramatic tension, the emotional *and* intellectual coherence in favor of some statement of theme abstracted from it by paraphrase. Perhaps, best of all, we might learn to distrust our ability to represent any poem adequately by paraphrase. Such a distrust is healthy. Keats’ sylvan historian, who is not above teasing us, exhibits such a distrust, and perhaps the point of what the sylvan historian “says” is to confirm us in our distrust.

by Edouard Roditi

A FRENCH POET AND HIS ENGLISH CRITICS

BY 1890, the myth of Arthur Rimbaud's life and his aesthetics had already deeply influenced both the form and the subject-matter of much modernist French poetry. But they did not affect English or American poetry to any appreciable extent until the second and third decades of the present century, and then only the poetry of small groups which followed closely the fads and fashions of Montparnasse.

Yet in 1872 and 1873, Verlaine and Rimbaud had lived together for several months in London. Rimbaud was then writing his *Illuminations*, where he applied to the letter his new theories of art and of life which were fated to arouse so much discussion, long after he had later abandoned them. The two French poets do not seem, however, to have at all frequented London literary circles; and in English poetry and criticism of that period, no trace has yet been detected of Rimbaud's or of Verlaine's influence. Thirteen years later, in 1886, George Moore indeed undertook to reveal to English aesthetes, in the *Confessions of a Young Man*, all the mysteries of French Symbolism and of the Decadent movement which he had just discovered in Paris. All in a jumble, he listed Baudelaire, "beautiful in supreme decay," Aloysius Bertrand's *Gaspard de la nuit*, the *Contes immoraux* of Petrus Borel, Banville, Coppée, Dierx, Verlaine, Mallarmé, all the French Parnasse movement and the various schools of the "fin de siècle," finally even *Instrumentisme* and the *Ecrits pour l'art* of its founder, René Ghil, about whom George Moore writes: "Arthur Rimbaud was, it is true, first in the field with these pleasant and genial theories: but Mr. Ghil informs us that Rimbaud was mistaken in many things, particularly in coupling the

sound of the vowel U with the color green instead of the colour yellow. Mr. Ghil has corrected this very stupid blunder and many others."

From this passage, it appears that George Moore was still unacquainted with Rimbaud's theory of the *Alchimie du verbe* and knew only its feeble and absurd reflections in Ghil's works; and Moore ridicules these with characteristically humorous politeness. A few years later, however, in his essay *Two unknown poets* which as reprinted in 1891 in *Impressions and opinions*, George Moore seems to want to revise his earlier appreciation of Rimbaud's significance. By then, he had apparently succumbed to the spell of Rimbaud-worship; and in the few pages of his brief essay, one discovers an early version, still very primitive, of the Golden Legend of the Passion of the new saint, "who came to Paris composing beautiful verses when he was only fifteen, and who in a few years anticipated in some half-dozen prophetic poems all the poetic revolutions of the last twenty years." Prophetic poems, poetic revolutions: this is already the vocabulary of the religion and politics of art which, towards the end of the last century and the beginning of our own, had replaced all true religious experience and political action in the lives of an upper class which sought its only justification in culture. And further on, discussing the titles of Rimbaud's poems, George Moore adds: "strange titles, strange as the poems, strange as the life of the poet—the miraculous boy who came to Paris when he was fifteen, with such a poem as *Le bateau ivre* in his pocket—that extraordinary boy who has fled from civilization, and whose brief life is involved in legend and mystery, fantastic and impenetrable." The two pages which follow deserve attention; here is but a brief summary of the legendary biography of the miraculous boy as George Moore wished to see it, modestly refraining either from knowing or from divulging how Rimbaud first met Verlaine: "there are no means of discovering (how they met). . . . Verlaine was the hourly companion of the younger poet . . . it is impossible not to speculate sometimes how much the genius of the poet who has since realized his aestheticism depended on the genius of him

who made formal renunciation of the laurel-leaf." Concerning the quarrel which took place in Brussels when the relationship which had existed between the two poets, a homosexual one, ended abruptly with Verlaine's shooting at Rimbaud and Verlaine's subsequent imprisonment, George Moore writes discreetly: "little is known . . . and that is written on the sky of palest legend in letters of blood." And he adds: "in a house of ill-repute in Brussels, in some drunken quarrel . . . Rimbaud was stabbed by Verlaine." But the incident, far from occurring in any bordello, for which neither poet at that time would have had much use, actually occurred in the street; and the weapon was a common gat, no romantic dagger, yatagan or kris. After Verlaine's release, George Moore writes, "the poets only met once again. The account of this meeting rings strange and hollow as an old-world story . . . Rimbaud had learnt to understand the immediate necessity of repentance, and it was only in the vain slight hope of inducing his friend to follow him into a purer life that he consented to see him again. But Verlaine's hour of grace had not yet come, and instead of listening to Rimbaud's exhortations, he sought to dissuade the young disciple from his resolve to abandon the vain glory of art, and consecrate his life to the redemption of his soul from sin. But Rimbaud closed his eyes and ears to allurements and temptations, bade Verlaine farewell, and left Europe to immure himself for ever in a Christian convent on the shores of the Red Sea; and where it stands on a rocky promontory, he has been seen digging the soil for the grace of God."

In this fantastic distortion of the facts of Rimbaud's life, Moore has reversed, for instance, the parts which the two poets actually played when they met for the last time in Stuttgart. For Verlaine turned up, as Rimbaud describes him in a letter, "with a rosary in his hand;" and Rimbaud, far from allowing himself to be converted by a maudlin and repentant Verlaine, really tried to borrow money from him. And then, instead of cloistering himself in a convent, Rimbaud actually went off to lead a tough life which finally led him to be a trader on the caravan-routes of Abyssinia, smuggling arms among other wares and perhaps not

disdaining to do a little slave-trading on the side. But George Moore, dazzled by the tale that he himself has just woven, concludes: "the mediaevalism of this strange story has always had a singular fascination for me. . . . I have seen the desolate convent and the single figure digging in the Eastern twilight. . . . The now Christian monk, the whilom scorner of all law, human and divine, left the poetic revolution to be achieved by Verlaine, and of this Marlowe of 1870, not killed in a tavern broil, but awakened by wounds to a sense of sin, there remain but a few poems and a few fragments, hardly more than remain of Sappho.

Are these final references to Marlowe and Sappho sly hints or a Freudian slip? Anyhow, few readers, some fifty years ago, would have detected what truth they concealed; and the main lines of the legend of Rimbaud which then spread in England and America, among "decadent" readers of the *Yellow book*, of George Moore and of Oscar Wilde, were those of the golden legend as told in *Impressions and opinions*. Today, it is no longer necessary to correct all its errors: we have an adequate and exact English biography of Rimbaud in Enid Starkey's.

But it is significant that Rimbaud's earliest English biographer should have preferred legendary gossip to more sober facts which he could easily have ascertained. George Moore knew, in London and in Paris, enough writers who were close friends of Verlaine and who might have told him how the two French poets had first met, why they later quarreled in Brussels, finally how Verlaine, not Rimbaud, had embraced Catholicism and tried, in Stuttgart, to convert the other. At the turn of the century, English readers thus discovered Rimbaud's work through the legends of the two "accursed poets" that their more respectable friends were already propagating, in Paris, in order to conceal the more scandalous facts. And in the London *Contemporary review* of June, 1902, S. C. de Soissons complains: "Strange news would appear in the journals about Rimbaud's great artistic labours somewhere in the depths of Asia, about the literary plans he was going to realise after his return, about his ruling over some savage tribe in Africa etc. . . ."

French writers are often named, quoted and discussed in the pages of London's more advanced literary journals of that period, in the *Yellow book*, the *Albemarle* and the *Savoy*. Baudelaire, Flaubert, Zola, Huysmans, Verlaine, Anatole France, Pierre Louys, are most frequently mentioned; French philosophies of art for art's sake, the aesthetics of the Paris Parnasse, of French naturalism, the decadent movement and neo-alexandrinism, all these were bringing, to a generation weary of lush Victorian sentimentalism and plush-covered bourgeois Romanticism, some elements of artistic discipline and doctrine which were sorely needed. Many younger writers, William Butler Yeats, Henry James, A.E., even John Buchan, Maurice Baring, Arnold Bennett and Bernard Shaw, were thus able, thanks in part to French models, to dissociate themselves more easily from cumbersome traditions of the Great Victorians, and to develop a more subtle art. For this new group, George Moore soon became a sort of Flaubert, a prophet of art for art's sake and of the exact word; but his art, unfortunately, limited itself too often to embellishing a basically limp style and replacing a banal word by a rarer synonym. Moore's *Brook Kerith* is his *Salamambo*, *Esther Waters* his *Madame Bovary*: such a writer could not easily appreciate the true significance of Rimbaud's *Alchimie du verbe*. Only the bizarre elements of the Rimbaud legend, the unexpected in his poetics, enchanted Moore who, at that time, was so very easily impressed and delighted by everything novel or odd. But Moore seemed unable to distinguish art from arbitrary artifice, poetry from mere rhetoric, Rimbaud from René Ghil. *The confessions of a young man* thus reveal the impressions and opinions of a young English aesthete who is as anxious to be shocked by French artistic theory as to shock with his knowledge of it; later, *Impressions and opinions* merely tries to elaborate or correct some of the earlier book's hasty or incomplete judgements, such as the page where Moore, with an odd mixture of ignorance and irony, attaches more importance to Ghil than to Rimbaud. But instead of a thorough critical appreciation of Rimbaud's work, Moore still gave his readers only impressions of the French

poet's already legendary life, and opinions which are still generally erroneous.

Arthur Symons illustrates more clearly the characteristic weakness of that period's literary criticism. In *The sacred wood*, T. S. Eliot rightly accuses Symons of representing "what is always called *aesthetic criticism or impressionistic criticism*." And Eliot adds: "If we recall the time when we were ignorant of the French Symbolists, and met with *The Symbolist movement in literature*, we remember that book as an introduction to wholly new feelings, as a revelation. After we have read Verlaine and Laforgue and Rimbaud and return to Mr. Symons' book, we may find that our impressions dissent from his." And Eliot concludes that, if Symons' book "has not a permanent value for the one reader . . . it has led to results of permanent importance to him."

The critical writings of Arthur Symons, in spite of his indisputable taste and erudition, thus lack the quality of abstraction which would have assured them a permanent value. Symons has failed to stress the permanent values of the many writers whom he discussed and revealed to his English readers: instead, he has always indicated only his own fleeting impressions and the less permanent values, in the works that he discusses, which recommended them to the attention of readers of decadent or impressionistic periodicals. His criticism interests us today because it reveals to us the impressions that a man of taste, some fifty years ago, felt as he read books that we still read but which now impress us differently.

Rimbaud's name appears several times in the critical writings of Arthur Symons. It appears there for the first time only fleetingly, as a brief apparition in the swirling clouds of Verlaine-worship. In *Colour studies in Paris*, a volume of essays and articles preceded by a sonnet dated 1890, the chapter entitled *Notes on Paris and Paul Verlaine* presents the author of the *Alchimie du verbe* only in the part of a satellite: "When, four years later, the *Romances sans paroles* appeared, Verlaine had already given way to every kind of self-indulgence, and with a sort of mad Bohemian gaiety was trailing a strange companion,

the young poet Arthur Rimbaud, over France, Brussels, Germany and England. The pilgrimage was ended by a pistol-shot (I have heard Verlaine talk of it, very coolly). . . .

George Moore, whenever he went to Paris, led there the eccentric life of a "Milord" aesthete, always dazzled by the Bohemian world of the artists, rarely understanding it or penetrating it except as a curious and somewhat aristocratic "visiting fireman." But Symons was truly at home in Paris and knew all the various Parnassian, Decadent and Symbolist groups; he had many close friends among the extremist French poets, especially Moreas and Verlaine himself, who told him the official version of Rimbaud's wanderings, edited *ad usum delprini* with details as truthful as they were then able or willing to supply. If Symons can still be accused of having propagated a fanciful myth of Rimbaud's life, it must also be said in his favor that he did this almost unwittingly, partly because, though he consulted the most authoritative sources, what he was able to glean from his Paris friends was not always correct, partly too because his own enthusiastic style, that of Symbolism's chief English apologist, gave to all his literary biographies the tone of hagiographies.

In addition to this brief allusion to Rimbaud's wanderings, *Colour studies in Paris* contains also a caricature of the miraculous child. It is signed by M. Luqué and represents a baby, with the head of an adolescent, busy coloring, with a huge paint-brush, five large vowels, each of them in the form of a wooden block such as those of a child's alphabet. Four paint-pots, in the foreground, bear the following labels: *Noir, Blanc, Bleu, Vert*. A fifth pot, bearing no label, certainly represents the red of I in Rimbaud's famous *Sonnet des voyelles*, where he assigns a color to each one of the vowels.

A few years later, in the *Symbolist movement in literature*, whose preface is dated June, 1899, Symons tells his English readers, in a series of biographies full of critical appreciations, the legendary lives of the chief apostles of French Symbolism: Nerval, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Laforgue, Mallarmé, Huysmans and Maeterlinck. *Colour studies in Paris*

had already contained such sketches of Robert de Montesquiou, called *The poet of the bats*, of Aristide Bruant, Charles Cros, Yvette Guilbert, Léon Bloy, Petrus Borel and Odilon Redon. It is interesting to note that the Olympian hierarchies of Surrealism can already be detected in the readings of George Moore's "young man" and in Arthur Symons' choice of French poets: the names of Nerval, Rimbaud and Petrus Borel reveal that the Parisian schools where English aesthetes, fifty years ago, were discovering the new doctrines of art for art's sake were still oddly romantic and, at the same time, already almost Surrealist. Only Lautréamont's name is still lacking to complete the constellation of "dark stars" that Surrealism, from 1920 onwards, claimed as its nineteenth-century ancestors.

Every page of *The Symbolist movement in literature* bristles with words that already belong to the mythical terminology peculiar to the new cult of art as a religious experience: legend, visionary, mystified, wonderful, astonished dreamer, all these are terms which indicate clearly what impressions Symons, and George Moore too, sought in their readings. Of Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Symons writes: "Even before his death, his life had become a legend. And the legend is even now not to be disentangled from the actual occurrences of an existence so heroically visionary." Nor does Symons make any very convincing attempt to disentangle legend from fact, either here or in his brief biography which is so clearly derived from the book that Rimbaud's brother-in-law, Paterne Berrichon, had just published in Paris to whitewash his relative's scandalous reputation. In a bibliographical appendix, Symons mentions, among other sources, Berrichon's biography of Rimbaud, the Letters of Rimbaud which had been published in 1899, Verlaine's *Poètes Maudits*, the portrait of Rimbaud which Verlaine had published in *Les hommes d'aujourd'hui*, Moore's *Impressions and opinions*, John Gray's *Silver-points* (1893) and Sturge Moore's *The vinedresser* (1899). The last two volumes contain translations of a couple of Rimbaud's poems; the translators stress very strongly the Decadent or

Symbolist aspect of Rimbaud whom, on the whole, they render very inaccurately into English. Rimbaud's life, according to Symons, is already "that story of the *Arabian nights*, which is at the same time a true story . . . full of curiosity for those who have been mystified by I know not what legends, invented to give wonder to a career itself more wonderful than any of the inventions." It is indeed interesting to observe how each biographer, while himself spreading mere legend, in turn stresses his purpose as being to dispel all apocryphal legends by at last revealing a canonical and true story. Symons again insists on the poet's wandering: "he had given up literature to travel hither and thither." And when Verlaine introduced Rimbaud among his friends, the miraculous child "astonished the whole Parnasse, Banville, Hugo himself. . . . The secret of Rimbaud . . . is that his mind was not the mind of the artist but of the man of action. He was a dreamer, but all his dreams were discoveries." In these last remarks, a new theme appears, that of dream and action, of poetry which is cosmogony or exploration and of exploration that is poetry, an *a posteriori* explanation of the Rimbaud mystery which, over thirty years later, was again to suggest to Leonard Bacon his poem *Dream and action*, an epico-metaphysical interpretation of Rimbaud's life. Finally, Symons remarks that Rimbaud's genius, since his work can so clearly be distinguished from that of his contemporaries, was not essentially literary, for Symons also admired the genius and the poetry of the other Symbolists and, noticing in Rimbaud's poems different effects, must attribute them to different causes in the poet. Thus the influence which Rimbaud certainly exerted on Verlaine was that "of the man of action upon the man of sensation . . . of what is simple, narrow, emphatic, upon what is subtle, complex, growing." And here we clearly see the legend of a 'different' Rimbaud taking shape: angel or beast, he is no longer like other men. But one also begins to wonder whether Rimbaud was really less sensitive than Verlaine, or indeed less complex; it would perhaps be more exact to say that Verlaine was more simple, narrow,

emphatic, since the poet of the *Alchimie du verbe* today seems so much more subtle, complex, growing.

Elsewhere, in the critical writings of Arthur Symons, the name of Arthur Rimbaud still appears several times. In an essay on Huysmans, for instance, Symons is surprised that the author of *A rebours* should fail to mention the *Alchimie du verbe* among the readings of Des Esseintes. But our history of the Rimbaud legend's spread in England can glean nothing from these other fleeting mentions.

With his Impressionistic vocabulary, Symons built up odd analogies between poets and was thus led to vague conclusions. Impressionist, Symbolist and Decadent all mean, in his criticism, more or less the same thing: he thus calls Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* "a Symbolist drama;" and his terminology never allows him to distinguish very clearly Rimbaud's poetry from that, say, of Verlaine, Cros, Mallarmé, Baudelaire or Nerval. All these various types of poetry, springing from such varied conceptions of the nature, purpose and means of poetry, Symons confuses in a vague new aesthetics which he admires and 'sells' to his readers without knowing now to define it, only how to define his own impressions of it; and he is thus forced to distinguish his various poets by his impressions or by biographical and psychological peculiarities in the legendary characters that he attributes to each of them so that each symbolizes, in his new Olympus, a different aspect of the ineffable and indescribable whole to which he is initiating his English readers.

A third English critic of the "fin de siècle" has also devoted an article to Arthur Rimbaud: Charles Whibley, whose most important work was a wonderful series of reprints of those long-forgotten masters of English prose, the Elizabethan translators, Florio, Urquhart, Holland, Underdowne etc. . . . In *The Sacred Wood*, T. S. Eliot complains that Whibley is not an original critic: "We may opine that Mr. Whibley has not uttered a single important judgment upon any of all this literature. . . . But he convinces us that if we read the books that he has read we should find them as delightful as he has found them."

On such a promoter of forgotten works and neglected talents, such an erudite bibliophile and lover of the marvellous, the adventurous and the odd, the legend of Rimbaud's life and works, still unknown to the general public of England and even of France, was bound to exert a great appeal. And in 1899, in the February issue of *Blackwood's Magazine*, Charles Whibley published a long biographical study of Rimbaud: *A vagabond poet*. The publication of Paterne Berrichon's "official" biography of his truant brother-in-law had furnished the occasion; and Whibley acclaimed this dubious hagiography as a true believer would a canonical text destined at last to dispel all apocryphal legends. But Whibley also undertook to present this truth in as attractive a light as the legends which it was intended to displace had diffused; and thus, while perhaps believing that he is telling facts, Whibley couches them in a legendary style and in all the mythological vocabulary of his generation. Rimbaud, he affirms, "has suffered in all their bitterness the miseries of an indiscreet fame . . . despite his unsought glory . . . (he) has been infamously treated by those who profess his worship." Whibley already distinguishes blasphemers and heretics in the new cult of the saint whom sacrilegious minds are turning into an "unconscious apostle of a foolish creed." And to confound the "foolish man who seeks a nerveless solace in the vice of others," and "overlooked the talent of Rimbaud in the false record of his boyish indiscretion," he tells us now the essential facts of this miraculous childhood. At the age of fourteen, Rimbaud "had even discovered for himself the charm of Madame Desbordes Valmore, who now, after thirty years, is a fashionable poet. And he achieved this without ever foregoing the privileges of an Ishmael."

When the young vagabond arrived for the second time in Paris, "the Communards, struck with pity with the boy's lean and haggard look, made a generous collection for him; it is less surprising that he instantly spent the money for their benefit. However, the butchery of this belated revolution soon disgusted him. Later, even when the Olympian Hugo himself dubbed him *Shakespeare enfant*, he broke into a laugh." Vagabond as Ish-

mael, pitied by a whole ruthless government, generous as a saint and sacrificing the proceeds of this pity to the common good, recoiling from extremist butchery, too modest to accept Hugo's praise, Rimbaud, "suspected for his part in the Commune, fled with Verlaine to Belgium. Thus he lived again the life of a scholar gipsy . . . never regretting in penury the debauch which the last sovereign had purchased." Whibley sees Verlaine and Rimbaud squandering gold coins; actually, the two poets considered themselves rich when they had mere silver in their pockets. As for their quarrel in Brussels, "the tongue of scandal has wagged without knowledge of the truth" and, in Stuttgart, "the scene was grotesque, and acted on either side in the spirit of melodrama. Verlaine, wishing no doubt to amuse the friend whom he had shot, came in the habit of a brigand, an indiscretion quite sufficient to disgust Rimbaud . . . (who), still furious at the other's revolver, followed Verlaine into the forest, and gave him a sound thrashing." Whibley thus sets the Stuttgart scene in some Black Forest; what with the brigand costumes and the scenery, it all looks like an Offenbach light opera. Later, in Africa, "the natives regarded with awe this tall, lank, large-handed, blue-eyed Frenchman, who spoke their tongues, espoused their just cause, and permitted no familiarity." The whole of Abyssinia reveres him: just, charitable, learned, evangelical, taciturn, "just man of affairs, the patron of the oppressed," the man who was perhaps a slave-trader is already a saint. And on meeting him, the explorer Borelli makes this remark, worthy of being carved beneath allegorical figures on the facade of some Chamber of Commerce building: "How far better would science have been served had we exchanged our rôles." And Whibley adds this pathetic conclusion: "When indeed has science paid a more generous tribute to commerce?"

Whibley fails, however, to mention Rimbaud's reported conversion to Catholicism, in Marseilles, a few hours before his death. But he does state that, when news of this death reached Abyssinia, Ras Makonnen was barely able to overcome his grief

as he murmured: "God calls back to himself those whom the earth is not worthy to bear."

Charles Whibley never hesitates in his narrative of all these legendary wonders. True to all medieval traditions of heroic and saintly lives, Rimbaud's biography must also contain its hints of a prodigious childhood: "Once, in his childhood, when a piano was denied him, he learned that instrument by practising on a painted board." Whibley's *A vagabond poet* reveals no new facts; at best, it is a pious compilation of apocryphal legends, recounted with enthusiasm and picked from Berrichon's biography and other even less reliable sources.

It is significant that not one of these three English critics, George Moore, Arthur Symons and Charles Whibley, had yet attempted any literary appreciation of Rimbaud's writing or any exact evaluation of the technical novelties that he had introduced into French poetry. All three were content to sketch Rimbaud's biography for their readers as that of a sort of super-man, stressing the ethical significance of his already legendary life. It would be interesting to know how English and American readers, at the turn of the century, reacted to this curious critical appreciation of a foreign writer. True, readers as well as critics, in those days, tended to confuse writers with their characters, Wilde with Dorian Gray, Huysmans with Des Esseintes, Zola's moral character with that of the drunks, pimps and prostitutes who appear in his novels. But no documentary evidence has yet been unearthed to indicate what English readers thought of Rimbaud after being introduced to his works through such biographical sketches. We may only assume that they reacted in the same way as French readers who, for over half a century, have now been utterly confused by grandiose legends of Rimbaud's life and by fanciful theories concerning the significance and purpose of his art.

As one now reads these English critical appreciations, one is tempted to believe that the English impressionist critics were perhaps not yet able to avail themselves of material which might have helped them form a more intelligent opinion of Rimbaud's

life and works. Indeed, apart from a few of Verlaine's essays and Berrichon's biography, Moore, Symons and Whibley knew only vague gossip concerning their subject, wild tales that circulated in the literary cafés of Paris, legends which the French Symbolists repeated, embroidered, amplified and distorted in order thereby to project some magic prestige on their own new theories of poetry. But why this desire to invent such legends? In other ages, other poets had led odd lives without inspiring such myths among their own contemporaries. Chatterton died presumably of malnutrition; Tasso, Hoelderlin and John Clare went mad, Marlowe was murdered in a tavern brawl, Villon led the life of a bum and was perhaps condemned to be hanged, Novalis and Nerval committed suicide, many poets, before and after Dante, lived in exile, were crusaders, or repented and retired into cloisters. But their contemporaries, before the nineteenth century, were not amazed; only the Romantics, from Vigny to their latter-day heirs such as Claudel and the Surrealists, wove legends around these odd lives. And one can only believe that the poets and critics of the nineteenth century felt the need to react against a literary life which was ever becoming more literary and less adventurous. Villon, Tasso or Nerval, by the examples of their personal tragedies, indicated avenues of escape to those later poets who, to quote one of them, Jules Laforgue, found life "trop quotidienne;" but Arthur Rimbaud offered to his friends and contemporaries the almost impossible example of a purer poetry and, at the same time, an even more adventurous life. He thus became, for all these poets and those of two whole later generations, a sort of god; and the legends of his exciting life give us the measure of the boredom and impotence of the critics and poets who invented them.

In June, 1902, and again in April, 1912, *The Contemporary Review* published essays by Count S. C. de Soissons who discussed in them Rimbaud's life and works without allowing himself any of these extravagances. And this proves that the legends of Rimbaud were not so much the result of a lack of proper documents for a biography as of a state of mind which definitely preferred

legend to fact. Mr. de Soissons is frank about his admiration for Rimbaud's poetry and character: "A man who gives to poetry but four years of his youth—from his fifteenth to his nineteenth year—, who during that time produces extraordinary and unique works of genius, and who then suddenly gives up writing, leaves the country and disappears . . . would, in any country and in any century, be considered an extraordinary phenomenon. Usually men become accustomed to their occupation and grow fond of the sphere of activity they have entered. . . . In these days of division of labour, when a vocation quickly becomes a profession . . ., one seldom sees a complete man." The first of these two articles is a review of Berrichon's biography: "It was however possible to understand that striking figure even before Berrichon published biographical documents, from an attentive reading of Rimbaud's writings." But this attentive reading is exactly what, it seems, George Moore, Arthur Symonds and Charles Whibley never attempted; and Mr. de Soissons, though misled by some of Berrichon's pious myths, was yet able, thanks to his readings of the poems, to understand the poet's life better than most other critics of his times: "*Les Illuminations* and *Une saison en Enfer* are penetrated with one great, unsatisfied desire . . . to know everything . . . to unveil all secrets . . . to embrace the universe, to concentrate it in oneself, to dissolve in it like a wandering cloud . . . to be able to do everything. . . . He could not be satisfied with poetry, in which the result always falls short of the creative dream, nor with Europe. . . ." Romanticism had indeed given Rimbaud an exalted conception of poetry and the poet; disappointed, he abandoned poetry, but Romanticism avenged itself on him by misinterpreting his rejection of all poetry and presenting it as a progression towards the poetry of action.

From internal evidence in the poems, Mr. de Soissons distinguishes, in his second essay, the various stages of Rimbaud's development. Again, he stresses what he calls "Rimbaud's constant penchant towards a synthesis." This critic's two essays add nothing to the existing legend of Rimbaud; on the contrary, they prove that it was already possible for an honest and objective

critic to understand and discuss Rimbaud's poetry in literary terms. Modest as they are, they offer a far more adequate introduction to the life and works of Arthur Rimbaud than the more ambitious and brilliant vagaries of more famous critics. Indeed, S. C. de Soissons' two essays would still form an excellent introduction to any English translation of Rimbaud's complete works, should such a volume ever be collected by a translator who has the energy and patience to correct the many absurd mistakes which have been made in most of the existing and scattered translations.

by William D. Grampp

EVERYMAN HIS OWN JEFFERSONIAN

HENRY Adams has remarked that each generation must rewrite its history and, we can infer, it must make over the historical great in its own image. For some two centuries America has been reconstituting the founding fathers to satisfy the craving each generation has for symbols that will infuse the partial, uncertain, and interested present with the revered and disinterested past. Of all of the men who made the United States none has been more subject to retransformation in the light of the present than Thomas Jefferson. If nothing else, the bicentenary of his birth, which is celebrated this year, confirms this. The innumerable variants rung on the Jeffersonian tradition furnish lush opportunities for the sociologist of knowledge and a kind of intellectual historian, just as the tradition itself offers no end of material for the professional rhetorician and another kind of historian.

In a society as combed with discrete interest groups as ours is, the remaking of Thomas Jefferson is a most complicated process, for each group must offer its own interest as deriving from the past. Consequently he has been presented, at the moment or in the relatively near past, as the American Locke, a revolutionary Plato, the founder of the single tax, a grass roots Robespierre, the gentle Physiocrat of Virginia, the American advocate of Adam Smith, the arch protagonist of laissez faire, the timeless rebel, the founder of the Democratic party (and the Republican party), an arch atheist, a true believer, the father of American isolation, the first cosmopolite, a full blown imperialist, and on and on in an unending list that is growing every year and this year as in no other. A valuable addition for some future antiquarian will be the interesting portraiture in the Communist press of Jefferson

as the eighteenth century Browder and *vice versa*. The third president of the United States is a rich subject for the interminable process of interpretation and reinterpretation, because he was certainly the most Protean of all of the founders, he was both a political and theoretical man, his literary legacy is large and diffuse and has not yet been fully collected and systematized.

I

Now the fact that each age roots its symbols out of the past is not in itself remarkable, although Henry Adams made it seem so with his peculiar ability for cogent statement. Nor is it at all unusual that historical figures should undergo an infinite mutation as they are transmitted from generation to generation. Simply to observe that men view Jefferson differently is hardly worth the effort. But more is involved than just that. The Jefferson tradition has been kept kindling for generations while other figures of the revolution and Constitution have faded into an academic past, to be exhumed from time to time only by an historical monograph or a Congressional committee looking for ways to spend its appropriation. The ideas of Jefferson, or what men believe them to be, live on effortlessly, while the systems of others rather merge into the fixed past. This is not invariably true, of course, for we do occasionally revalue Washington, the Adams dynasty, Hamilton, Madison, and others. But the re-evaluation is trifling compared to attention Jefferson receives. John Adams has been impaled as a "monarchist," and left in peace. Washington is a nebulous figure, and has not intruded much on the modern conscience. We think of Hamilton as the apologist for American industrialism, and conveniently go no farther. Madison has become imbedded as the father of the Constitution, and left comparatively undisturbed. Even Tom Paine finds it difficult to compete with Jefferson. Now most of our vague notions of the founders are elliptic if not totally erroneous, but the misconceptions do not seem of great moment because we dig out of the past only what appears useful and leave the remainder undisturbed.

It is instructive to wonder why Jefferson should be considered a part of our useful past while others receive comparatively slight attention. It can hardly be that his contribution was greatest. He took no part in the proceedings of the constitutional convention. He did not, as commonly believed, formulate the bill of rights; this was really a product of the age and its intellectual climate.

The opposition to the Federalists was not dominated by him, and the Republican party was not his single creation. If any individual dominated the constitutional period it was Alexander Hamilton. While president Jefferson was forced into adopting measures which he loathed while in the opposition. His importance in the revolutionary period is of course greater. He was one of the original nucleus that grew into the committees of correspondence, he was governor of Virginia, and he wrote the Declaration of Independence. But an examination of the original copy reveals that John Adams and Benjamin Franklin had a great hand in it, if only by their deletions. (After much writing over and crossing out, the section condemning slavery was deleted entirely.) And although Jefferson was justly proud of the document he hardly would have laid claim to originality; some passages are virtually repetitions of phrases from Locke's *Treatises on Civil Government*, and certainly the spirit is that of Locke and the age of reason. Jefferson's literary productions do not derive their importance from full bodied tracts; he left nothing comparable to John Adams' *Defence of the Constitutions*, to Hamilton and Madison's *Federalist* papers, to Paine's *Age of Reason*, *Agrarian Justice*, or *Rights of Man*. His writing, with the exception of the *Summary View* and *Notes on Virginia*, is fragmentary, and although it embodies a well-defined point of view this must be culled from letters, speeches, reports, and *The Anas* (probably the most valuable, certainly the most unusual, political diary ever kept).

Yet for all of this Jefferson is the most famous of the early Americans, if we appraise fame by the power of an individual to perpetuate a tradition or traditions. Two reasons suggest themselves for this curious situation. One lies in the character of

Jefferson himself, the other in the character of the period in which he lived. A summary consideration of these will indicate why, though he has been subject to innumerable interpretations, one particular one has predominated and why Jeffersonian historians far outnumber all others.

II

Given any of a number of predispositions and a modest effort at selection, one can furnish a Jefferson to fit almost any circumstance. Hence, William Jennings Bryan could discover Jefferson was a true religionist, Henry George could trace the American origins of the single tax to Jefferson's propensity for the French Physiocrats, John Dos Passos can discover he stands on the same ground as the early Republicans, Max Lerner can transform him into a 'democratic' collectivist, certain left-wingers can uncover Jefferson as a forerunner of Marxism, and a Columbia scholar can intimate he was not the liberal so often depicted. Such variants, played essentially on the same theme, are not so much the result of cunning (shudder at the thought) as of effort. Nor is it the result of elusiveness on the part of the hero himself, as one might be prone to conclude in sheer desperation. For Jefferson was quite as consistent as Hamilton, Madison, or any of the other men of his age. To winnow the logical thread out of the welter of observations is the purpose of another effort; here it is simply proposed to uncover, within the limitation of the space afforded, the roots of his doctrine and to show how these have become transformed, through process of ellipsis and effort, into partial explanations that have passed as exhaustive ones.

The American revolution was part of the movement embracing western Europe and England that had as its object the shattering of all of those encumbrances of medievalism that had shackled the development of capitalism. The incubus of the middle ages was not confined to objective behavior but to men's minds as well, and it was removed philosophically by the rationalism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and economically in the revolution worked by Adam Smith and his precursors. From the

judicious Hooker, Locke, Montesquieu, the French utilitarians—Helvetius and Holbach, Jefferson derived the substance of his political philosophy. He derived very little, it is well to note, from Hobbes, Rousseau, Hume, and others who formed a distinct component of British and French rationalism. This in itself is of no small interest, for we are inclined to distinguish between the two groups in terms of 'optimism and pessimism', radicalism and reaction, the elevation and the denigration of human nature, et cetera, even though such distinctions are really unsatisfactory and break down under scrutiny. (Was Hobbes, for example, a pessimist in believing men capable of forming a perfect government, a Leviathan, and was Locke an optimist because he proclaimed the necessity of revolution? Such distinctions lead to absurd paradoxes. Rousseau is popularly considered to have glorified human nature; yet his concept of sovereignty is almost identical to that of Hobbes, who is thought of as pessimist.)

Now if we want a liberal Jefferson all we need do is cull those panegyrics over the People in which his work abounds. 'We believed with them [the founders], that man was a rational animal, endowed by nature with rights, and with an innate sense of justice; and that he could be restrained from wrong and protected in right, by moderate powers, confided to persons of his own choice, and held to their duties by dependence on his own will', he wrote. (To Judge William Johnson) This is but a logical extension of his precursors' concept of sovereignty and the relationship between government and society. To them the state was not a monolithic embodiment of the general will and the monarch the personification of the governed. Had they believed this, as Hobbes and Rousseau did, the right of violent withdrawal by revolution would have no place in their galaxy of natural prerogatives. An act against society is an act against one's self, for which there is no justification, since self-preservation is the first law of nature.

Like John Locke, Jefferson had no great faith in fixing social relations, once and for all, or in the ability of a constitution to define satisfactorily the powers of government. And the very

idea of power he feared tremendously. Next to material wealth power was the greatest source of corruption. The depravity of magistrates is a clue to Jefferson's notions of human nature. The People are not imbued with sweetness and light either. Like their monarchs or republican rulers they are subject to evil as well as good. He wrote to Madison: 'In truth, I do not recollect in all the animal kingdom a single species but man which is eternally and systematically engaged in the destruction of its own species.' And for his 'faith' in the people, he wrote: 'I see the extent to which that delusion has already been carried, and I see there is no length to which it may not be pushed by a party in possession of the revenue.' (To Samuel Smith) Hence, if we want a reactionary Jefferson all we need do is cull over those letters in which he finds the people immersed in bestiality, greed, and natural depravity. This is not at all inconsistent of Jefferson, though one might, from merely reading the interpretations, infer a rather enigmatic character. Men are both good and bad, and they must be restrained and enlightened by their governors just as they restrain and enlighten them. One of the reasons for Jefferson's apparent elusiveness is the ambiguous relation between utilitarian ethics and the precepts of classic liberalism.

When the dual nature of his concept of human nature is realized, the divergence of opinion over Jefferson's politics is understandable. There is in his political philosophy both sympathy and scorn for human behavior, both faith and pessimism. Either of these can be drawn upon to work into everyman's Jefferson. Rather curiously, for all of the attention he has received, this dualism has gone unobserved.

The opinions over Jefferson's economic doctrine are almost as divergent as those over his political theory. This divergence traces to another dichotomy in his thought. To the extent that his economics are considered at all, they are usually dismissed as agrarian or else refurbished for purposes of special pleading. The work of Charles A. Beard in uncovering the sympathetic relationship between agrarianism and state sovereignty has so overwhelmed this phase of inquiry that little has been done with it.

Jefferson did speak kindly of agrarian utopias, but he thought also that Adam Smith was the greatest economist of his age. This juncture of French and British economics was actually made by an immediate forerunner of Jefferson's, Joseph Priestley, who worked in both the physical sciences and in political economy. The synthesis was effected, essentially by extending the labor theory of value from agriculture to all industry, and supplanting the pre-eminence of land by the pre-eminence of labor. This enabled Jefferson to be both an agrarian and industrialist, eventually a quasi-mercantilist in international economic relation. And it enabled each generation to read its own meaning into his economic doctrine: from Frederick List, the German emigré, to the Southern secessionists, to the single taxers, to the contemporary liberals. In his economic as well as political doctrine it is possible to find both reaction and revolution, and shades between. No one variant will be any more incorrect than another, for they are all incomplete.

III

I have tried to show that many interpretations of the Jeffersonian tradition are possible because of the plural character of his thought. All men in society, of good will and bad, can find in it something to identify themselves with and some part of a tradition to anchor themselves to. Yet for all of the variants possible, one in particular has become dominant. We can fashion Jefferson into various shades of conservative or democrat, but we usually make him into a democrat. The character of the period in which he lived suggests a reason for this.

The period of revolution and reaction in America, from about 1763 to 1800, was unique in many respects. It did not follow the classic pattern of extreme violence that turns on itself and ends in reaction and stabilization. In comparison to the British revolutions that preceded it and the French revolution at about the same time, it was rather a genteel experience. The non-military civil strife within the colonies (rebels vs. loyalists) was not as bitter as that in other countries, and the revolutionary war,

though protracted and hard, did not embrace the violence of the civil wars of Europe. The reaction from the revolutionary morés of 1776 culminated in the constitutional convention and in the Alien and Sedition legislation of 1797 and 1798, but this was mild compared to the Restoration and the French Directory. The American upheaval is an exception to the observation that each revolution devours its own. Peace, order, stability, and strength were achieved through the medium of constitutional discussion. The repression of 1797 and 1798 was more of a display of governmental power than its execution. These generalizations are relative, of course, but it is only by comparing America with Europe that any significant generalization can be made.

Because of the uniqueness of the period, the men who produced it and who were produced by it were also unique. No great figure arose to hurl revolution at the heads of the British aristocracy of title and wealth, no personification of national spirit emerged to go down in history with Cromwell, Danton, Robespierre, or Mirabeau, with Lenin, or even Lincoln. Because the separation was a collective endeavor, and was, moreover, executed by very diverse interests, no great revolutionary personality developed. The British can fix the great name of Cromwell to their revolution, the French to Danton or Robespierre, depending upon their tastes, the Russians to Lenin. American historians must subsume great names under the founding fathers.

Tom Paine may seem to fill the specifications of a great personality. Yet Paine's greatness dwelled in the revolution and is notably absent in the constitutional period which was equally significant to the founding of the American nation. And Paine was not an American—no more than he was an Englishman, or a Frenchman. He was a citizen of the revolutionary world, and could not have clothed himself in the national attributes requisite to personifying the revolution.

Yet to make the past usable such a figure must be found. He must personify an ideal that is believed typical of a way of life. He must be one to whom a nation and its components can turn

in time of stress; we must identify our ordeals with the hero's ordeals, seek repose in his tranquility, identify our enemies with his, extend the issues of his day to ours, find inspiration in his words, read our meaning into them—in sum, we must fashion in our image a character who will make us a part of a respected tradition and make this tradition a part of us. Because his system is infinitely mutable Jefferson has been turned to diverse uses, but because the present stands in need of a great democrat of the past he has been most often turned to that. And as everyman is his own democrat he has his own Jefferson.

by Alan S. Downer

ORSON AND THE CARPENTERS

THEATRICAL producers used to be money-lenders, ex-program-boys, or promoters: men who looked upon the drama as a comparatively safe risk. But the modern producer, more often than not—and with certain well-publicized exceptions—is himself a creator, interested in the drama as artistic expression. He studies the records of Craig and Appia and the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, he examines the works of Meyerholt and Stanislavsky. Aside from the rental of theaters and printing of tickets, he learns to apply a gloss of technical perfection to his productions, through the media of light and color and sound. His resources are unlimited. The latest philosophy of art, expressionism, futurism, constructivism, is known to him. Scientists thrust upon him the results of their research. He is a trained master-artist, guiding the destinies of his own creation, his production. Yet the contemporary theater has been on the downgrade for more years than it is pleasant to remember.

Not Alleyn nor Betterton, not Marlowe nor Congreve had such mechanical and artistic resources to draw upon. Yet Congreve wrote, and Betterton acted, *The Way of the World*; yet Marlowe wrote, and Alleyn acted, *Dr. Faustus*. Alleyn, ranting on his bare boards, might seem a ridiculous figure beside, say, Miss Hayes' perfectly-set cameos: might, if it were not that he was acting *Dr. Faustus*. Betterton might seem ridiculous, too, playing in sliding scenes by candlelight—except that he was acting *The Way of the World*, while Mr. Paul Muni, for all the technical perfection of the production which surrounds him, is forced to play *Counsellor-at-Law*.

Tudor stagecraft was makeshift, even childish, and Restoration stagecraft creaky, where modern stagecraft is competent and, in

a way, mature. But given three boards and a passion, and little assistance from a producer, the early playwrights created our small corpus of great drama. Now the positions are reversed and the producer, demanding little assistance from the playwright, is able to *do* anything. That the contemporary theater has accomplished so little is because producers, for the most part, are incapable of recognizing what is worth doing. The contemporary theater is rather like a child prodigy: it has learned how to do a number of grown-up things skillfully, without learning the reasons for doing them.

II

Child prodigies have always found the theater an indulgent godfather. In an age of expert mourning no more beautiful tears were shed than Ben Jonson's over Salathiel Pavy, scarcely thirteen years old,

Yet three fill'd zodiacks had he been
The stage's jewel.

Mozart, for all time commander of the forces of infant genius, was writing acceptable, if somewhat stilted, operas at fifteen. And the mighty Siddons and her brother, the gravely majestic John Kemble, found their leadership of the early nineteenth century stage seriously challenged by the popularity of William Henry West Betty, a boy of twelve, who committed the rôle of Hamlet to memory in three hours. Of late years, child prodigies have been largely confined to the cinema where they bear the weight, if not of *Hamlet*, at least of a million dollar investment, without turning a curl.

Youth, of course, still serves in the theater; Saroyan, Ezra Stone, Lenore Lonergan, the Abbott stable are hardly to be considered the seniors or even the peers in age of the majority of dramatists or of members of Actors' Equity. But, by common consent, the child wonder of today's world of the theater is Orson Welles. It is true that he is not much of a child any

more, but that he is still a wonder cannot be denied. While yet in preparatory school, he bullied his fellow amateurs in the dramatic society out of their usual program of *Charley's Aunt*, *The Patsy*, and *Aaron Slick* into the noisier historical fables of Shakespeare—to which productions as leading man he gave generously of his talents. Shakespeare, indeed, has been his close companion and collaborator throughout his career.

Today's theater is hardly limited to the legitimate stage, and those who practise in it must be able to turn their talents readily to the radio or the movies if they would please to live. Orson (it is impossible to think of him as Welles, or Mr. Welles) is no exception. From the shadowy voice of the Spirit of Crime on the air waves, he transformed himself without apparent effort into the shadowy personification of an ancient-modern-patriot-dictator-cum-democrat on the boards, and an equally shadowy emperor-of-journalism-with-a-complex on the screen. Yet Orson, even in his wildest moments of creation, is so consistent in attitude and technique that he may be summed up, classified, and filed away in a nutshell. To each of his chosen media he has brought a genius for startling effect, a gift for making immediate to the audience the implication of the plot, that is distinctively his. The Welles touch is as marked as the Hitchcock touch, or the Ziegfeld touch, a trademark, a guarantee, and a symbol. The hollow reverberation of the symbol, in fact, is a sign that the hand of Orson has passed over it.

III

There are two usual ways of approaching Shakespeare: by the *via sacra* of stage tradition, or the *via dolorosa* of the scholars: but for Orson there was but one, a fine, modern, cement path through a sort of Child's Garden of Horrors. Turning him loose with a text of the Bard is like giving a little boy a black and white drawing, a box of crayons, and no supervision. The little boy is not really to blame if he colors the faces green, the eyes red, the trees yellow, and the horses blue. Nor is Orson to blame if his Macbeth looks like Uncle Tom, and his

Fleance bears an uncertain resemblance to Little Eva, if his Caesar, and Brutus, and Cassius, and Antony act like Edward G. Robinson and his pals in a Warner Brothers gangster melodrama, if his Falstaff is derived from the boff-zam-zowie school of cartoon art.

Uncle Tom's Cabin and *Scarface* are, to be sure, always exciting, more exciting perhaps than *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth* for they are based upon the mores of our own small time without the larger implications of universality to confuse the unthinking and the uninterested. Excitement Orson has made his specialty. The rabble-rousing of Antony's famous oration has never so stirred an audience as under his direction. *Macbeth*, the most compactly thrilling of Elizabethan tragedies, has never been the success on the modern stage that he was able to make it. It is to be regretted that his production of *The Duchess of Malfi* died in rehearsal. That violent and bloody affair, with its modern counterpart in the Karloff-Lugosi movie cycle, would have employed all the good, and given occasion for little of the bad, side of his melodramatic talent.

The Negro *Macbeth*, staged for the Federal Theater, was the first indication of his attitude toward Shakespeare. It is an attitude based on the hoary fallacy that the dramatist was divisible into two: Jekyll, the man of the theater, and Hyde, the poet. Extract the theatrical elements, preferably the ones which are known to be effective on the modern stage, and fill up the gaps, when necessary, with poetry. If Garrić could play Macbeth in a tie-wig, Welles can do it in black face. No modern audience can be expected to understand the implications of the weird sisters, but voodooes and zombies (thanks to Karloff-Lugosi) are familiar to them. So Macbeth is driven along his fatal career, not by the super-natural beings whose bleakness and angularity set the mood of the whole play, but by a band of witch doctors who come dashing through the Haitian palm trees looking like something out of Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Julius Caesar fared worse. Orson saw in this tragedy of a misguided soul certain dim anticipations of modern news stories.

Caesar, he discovered was a dictator, and Caesar was killed by Brutus. It was therefore evident that Brutus represented the contemporary liberal, or democrat, fighting oppression. There were also some significant lines to be said with a pause and a knowing leer at the audience:

How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over,
In states unborn and accents yet unknown?

Sweet William, the dictator killer! Surely, if any play of Shakespeare's had significance for our day, it was this. The great difficulty was that Shakespeare, if anything, seemed to be on the side of the oppressor. Brutus, instead of acting like a liberal democrat, behaved like something of a dictator himself. And Antony, whose function in the play seems to be to bury not only Caesar but most of the *dramatis personae*, was the most unashamed demagogue of all. Even when cut to ribbons, and tricked out in modern dress, Shakespeare's plot persisted in rearing its ugly head. The stage Caesar looked and sounded like Mussolini—in the road company like Hitler; Hirohito had not then joined the fraternity—but the resemblance between Brutus and Franklin D. Roosevelt was something less than marked. Making Julius Caesar into a propaganda document for democracy is akin to turning *Vanity Fair* into suffragist propaganda. What Orson had when he finished, was what the movies have when they finish with an "historical" film—it was exciting, but any resemblance to the original was purely coincidental.

For his next bout with the Bard, Orson threw aside the stark simplicity that had characterized his production of *Caesar* in favor of a revolving stage and all the glitter and pageantry he could muster. His idea was to compress all the chronicle plays into two evenings, to be called *Five Kings*. He got no farther than Henry the Fifth, the third king and the first evening. The few who were privileged to see it, for it never reached New York, will never forget the handling of the battle scenes before Agincourt, the intelligent use of the revolving stage to focus scenes

as well as to change them. Nor will they forget the Hotspur, who was permitted to yell himself hoarse, the great gaps in the narrative filled up with the bald prose of old Raphael Holinshed, and the hideous debasement of Falstaff.

The failure of *Five Kings* and the success of *Caesar* are both to be credited to the youth of their producer. Youth is boid and prone to copy the bolder spirits. In the theater this has been the age of stagecrafters, and the bolder spirits have been in the last analysis stage carpenters who, in an effort to surpass the genuine achievement of the producers and directors of the first quarter of our century, have expended the fury of their genius in the mounting, frequently at the expense of the meaning, of the play. On occasion, these régisseurs have electrified the poet's script. But more often than not they have, in their own way, obscured the essence of the drama just as the painted wings and gaudy drops of Kean and Irving turned the stagecraft of the nineteenth century into a shambles of triviality. But they are bold and leaders, and youth is prone to follow.¹

Youth is also rash, impatient. If the meaning of Shakespeare is not what the producer's first glance tells him, so much the worse for Shakespeare. It is a hard lesson but one that must be learned that even a child wonder must apply as much imagination to the *interpretation de texte* as to the utilization of the marvels of modern stagecraft.

IV

Orson has a faculty for making a splash in whatever artistic pond he happens to jump, but it was on the radio that he created

¹For some years now Orson has left Shakespeare to heal his wounds as best he may under the ministrations of Margaret Webster. Last season, however, saw his methods applied by Mr. Coulouris to *Richard III*. The result was a failure simply because the actor-manager concentrated on staging the play with thrilling lighting effects and ignored the possibility of frightening the audience from their seats by acting the rôle for what it was worth. There was even the vulgar attempt to force a contemporary application on the conventional Elizabethan tag. Stepping to the footlights Richmond prayed: "Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord. That would reduce these bloody days again, And make poor England weep in streams of blood!" Such easy emotional appeals are but claptrap substitutes for the genuine excitement which Shakespeare creates by playing off his romantic devil against a number of more or less normal human beings.

his greatest and never-to-be forgotten kerplunk. This, of course, was his sensational production of H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* which set out to prove one thing, but, like his *Caesar*, ended by proving something quite different. The purpose of the broadcast was to simulate as realistically as possible the broadcast handling of a completely fantastic event. The result was a wave of mass hysteria all over the nation. Householders evacuated their homes, policemen reported New Jersey in flames, and analysts learned, (1) that not all the nation listened to Charlie McCarthy, and (2) that a large part of the nation was suffering from war nerves before we entered the war.

This hysteria, ridiculous and pathetic though it may have been, was no small tribute to the genius of Orson as a radio story teller. The radio drama has never been very convincing: the soap operas are maudlin; adaptations of plays, books, and motion pictures, melodramatic; and the "artistic" plays either are filled with bad poetry or get very little beyond experiments in technique. The willingness of the American public to be entertained, to believe what is sobbed and screamed at it over the microphone, is illustrated by the fact that the serials and plays run on and on. But it took Orson to drive the people out into the streets in terror. Orson made them believe the last thing in the world that they wanted to believe—that the sanctity of their homes was threatened, that their country was invaded. In the old days, people used to run up the theater aisle when a train came chugging at them on the screen. A friend of Petrarch's was unable to finish reading the story of Patient Griselda, so moved was he by her purely fictitious and highly incredible woes. But in New Jersey, on the night of October 30, 1938, a woman ran screaming into the street and begged passersby to save her two children from the men from Mars.

The radio technique which Orson developed was completely his own. While other writers were trying to make something that resembled the technique of the theater or the movies fit the special needs of the radio, Orson returned to first principles. Radio is entertainment for the ear; it is not enough to remove

the eye appeal from a stage play and expect it to preserve its impact. Consequently, his production of *The Count of Monte Cristo*—one of the most exciting shows radio has ever produced—began with a rush of music and a quiet voice saying, "I am Edmond Dantes." The hero came into the auditor's room through the loud speaker, sat beside him, and guided him through the tale. A short passage of narrative (usually by one of the characters in the story) is blended into a snatch of drama at climactic moments, the whole underlined, interpreted, and swaddled in music. It is the best solution so far discovered for an art which combines extreme intimacy between performer and audience, and a highly limited sensory appeal. Its effectiveness may be judged: Mary Marlin and Portia Blake and a hundred other heroines of the daytime serials sob and groan their way through catastrophe, divorce, operation, birth, death, and faithlessness—and the housewife continues her ironing, her baking, or her dusting; in *The War of the Worlds* an ordinary radio announcer impersonating an ordinary radio announcer read a "bulletin,"

Martian cylinders are falling all over the country. Black smoke drifting over the city. People in thousands see it now. They're running towards the East River, thousands of them, dropping in like rats. . . .

and thousands of people rushed outdoors to meet the attack, and even the more sober went to their telephones and called the police station. If nothing else, this at least must be said of Orson's radio technique: it works. Who can resist or doubt or refuse to share the experiences of that charming voice which announces, "I am Jane Eyre?"

V

Having astonished Broadway with *Caesar* and terrified Main Street with the Martians, one more field was left for Orson to conquer. He does not appear at the moment to have conquered Hollywood; it is unbowed, but bloody. All he had learned on the radio of narrative technique, all he had learned on the stage

of suggestive scenery and lighting, he, with the endless riches of the screen behind him, lavished on *Citizen Kane*. The spectator was thrown headlong into the story which developed bit by bit, like a Wilkie Collins novel. The huge castle of the millionaire publisher was suggested by a fireplace and a piano placed a city block apart and by creating a hollow overtone, mechanically, for the actors' voices. Especially startling were the lighting effects in the newsreel projection room, where shafts of light slashed the blackness in which the actors performed, and in the opera house, where the stage was shown as it appeared to the singers. A large orchestra provided thunderous accompaniments to the scenes depicting the ruthless rise to power of a newspaper magnate who had, apparently, no spark of human nature in him. But soft! as he dies, the audience hears him whisper the word, *Rosebud*. The suspense of the picture is built around that word. What is the meaning of *Rosebud*? At the last moment of the film it is revealed: *Rosebud* was the trademark on a sled which had been torn from Kane in his youth. The loss of *Rosebud* was the hump that framed him for a villain. The reasoning behind this is not, somehow, as convincing as Richard's, which is, God knows, unconvincing enough.

A year later, Orson's version of *The Magnificent Ambersons* further demonstrated his delight in the mechanics of his craft. Here again superb lighting suggested the gloomily moribund home of the Minnifers, the technique of direct narrative (this time with Orson as the off-stage voice) brought the story close to the spectator and bridged the gaps of a rather loose-jointed plot. The direction of the ballroom scenes with its feeling for the ebb and flow and interweaving of dancers and diners and talkers, was masterly. But the story was as dull and unexciting as *Citizen Kane* was pointless. The sound and fury which had given the earlier picture its drive and suspense were completely lacking in the plot of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, which can only be described as pallid.²

²The recent film, *Journey into Fear*, the direction of which was clearly inspired by Orson's methods, is neither pallid nor pointless. It is merely inaudible.

The truth seems to be that Orson is so completely a child of the theater that he cannot distinguish between a good play and a bad, the commonest of all theatrical failings. Melodramatic excitements, tricks of staging and lighting, hitting the audience between the eyes, at these he is unequalled. Regard for the intent of the artist, the playwright, he has none; witness his discovering Falstaff on a privy in the Boar's Head tavern, or his utter perversion of the romantic element in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Comprehension of the higher purpose of the theater he has none; witness, as much care expended upon the hollow flummeries of *Citizen Kane* as upon *Five Kings*. Orson is yet young, age may bring wisdom to eke out his surpassing cleverness. For the great artist—and this is the moral of his career—is more than a gifted handler of the brush or the chisel, the great singer is more than a master of Donizetti *bravura*, the great writer more than a compounder of nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, and the great man of the theater more than an electrician and carpenter.

All the Welles trademarks are present: scenes shot in the dark, familiar sounds used to create dramatic tension (the rasping phonograph record, the footfalls of the unseen pursuer), first person narrative to create unity. But since the plot is obscured by a failure on Orson's own part to speak clearly, these devices seem nothing more than pointless tricks and the ultimate sham of this whole method becomes clearly apparent. That this is too widely known for his own future good was demonstrated by his recent appearances on a radio comedy program where he was ridiculed as the kind of bogie-man who turns out to be the little boy next door, in false-face.

by Joseph Remenyi

PSYCHOLOGY OF WAR LITERATURE

WAR is apt to cripple the creative spirit (*inter arma silent Musae*) but, considering the output of warbooks today, it does not seem to diminish the quantity of writing. In fact, one must be resigned to the frantic and pragmatic attempt of many scribes who devote much of their time to the issues of war. However, in the flood of words that confronts the contemporary reader, it is important to differentiate between timely works and works, though timeless, that are also very timely. Man is prone to waver in his wrestling with destiny; this is also characteristic of many writers. Novels, for example, do not cease to be pot-boilers because "noble intentions" stir the heart of the authors. To recount episodes or events that show the selfadmitted stalwart disposition of the writer in the service of democracy, might reveal a span of months or years that are interesting or frightful interruptions of peace; yet such works, with all their actual or assumed documentation, are not necessarily literary attainments. A drummer might be needed in an orchestra, but he is not the orchestra itself. So many of the novels or plays, inspired by war or by the ideological expediency of war, seem to invalidate the principles of literature. They are clever, often not even clever; they are sensational, but often boring; the writers of personal narratives are inclined to be garrulous or champions of "thrillers" that make of facts rivals of unrestrained imagination.

Aristotle said that the supremacy of poetry over history consists in higher truth and higher dignity. No view is final in its infallibility; not even that of a Greek philosopher. The Greek sage evidently thought of the relationship of the word to a complete fate; no doubt, in terms of a complete human fate, the "personal history" of many writers in connection with the global

war or with the preliminaries of the war is fragmentary indeed. Such recollections show that the authors were witnesses of certain events, but that they were not creative writers who knew how to concentrate on essentials and how to express these essentials. *Universal conflagration suggests an interaction of forces which, in a sense, expects writers to be poets.* The accuracy of note-books is not sufficiently impressive. In relating experiences, the chiaroscuro method of interpretation is often used; black and white seem the only symbols born of this modern cataclysm. E. M. Forster remarks in his *Passage to India* that "it is not when we examine life, it is when we are examined by life that we become real persons." Thus the English novelist pays homage to inner discipline and humbleness. I am not underestimating the difficulties that a correspondent experiences when he writes about the collapse of civilized values with the horizon of immediateness. It is also comprehensible that in giving account of extraordinary events, despite the writer's scrupulousness, the temptation for sensationalism is almost unavoidable. Having been close to the scene of action interferes with the perspective of expression. Nevertheless Antoine de Saint Exupery's *Flight to Arras*, a story of a reconnaissance flight in France, indicates that it is possible to combine observation and expression without sinning against truth in relation to the essence of an experience.

There is value in the well organized accounts of correspondents like Lochner, Shirer, and a few others; their principles of qualification as to the material about which they wrote is more or less that of good journalists, probably offering future generations the kind of information that one sometimes finds in Plutarch, Livy, and Sallust in regard to ancient Rome. They are primarily concerned with the mobile elements of an experience; and though lacking, for instance, the unusual gift of character-delineation of Plutarch, (and I assume they themselves recognize their own limitations) there runs through their reports a thread of symbolized actuality that seems to connect the pre-war conditions of Germany, the war-conditions of Europe and those of the world

with the possibility of a basis for a sensible interpretation by future historians.

Of course, the ghastliness, sadness and heroism of war are recorded in novels, plays, and poems that have a certain literary merit. The perplexed, frightened or fearless human spirit, occasionally related to a concept that suggests the perfectibility of man, finds expression in novels written about the first World-War, as, for instance, in Vicente Blasco Ibanez's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* or in Henri Barbusse's *Under Fire*. The second World-War gave us Eric Knight's *This Above All* and John Steinbeck's *The Moon Is Down*. A much longer list could be enumerated, but the impression that one obtains from these novels would not be modified. The writers pour out words that show firmness, in some instance objectivity, or resentment against satanized humanity. They try to stir imagination through creative indignation. Such works contribute to the understanding of the complex problems of man in wartimes, but fail to reach the core of the problem. Like novelists who fictionize biographical topics, they fictionize war in obvious symbols. For example, John Steinbeck's central theme, that men want freedom, (naturally a very desirable attitude) is not adequately visualized in its psychological motivation. One senses that the writer was determined to prove his point; so he wrote a didactic novel in disproportion with his artistic ability, though in proportion with his moral and social intentions.

It is the creative approach to war that makes struggle in a profound psychological sense memorable. In great literary works puny or wicked humanity is not excluded from deep sorrow and nobility. It is the glory of the creative spirit that informs humans how to barricade themselves against their own smallness. Euripides's *Trojan Women* is a study in war, but also in feminine psychology. The plight of the Trojan women cries for pity and compassion, and it is understood by an Athenian audience of Pericles's time as well as by a modern audience. Great writers are always contemporaries.

In literary masterpieces one discerns the miracle of the umbilical

cord; it is the memento of man's individuality, of his organic self. Sentimental, moral, or cynical generalizations cannot replace this fact which is the connecting force between honesty and utterance in genuine literature. It is the psychology of this fact which triumphs. Abstract grief is a contradiction in term. Grief and joy must be concrete. The *ad hoc* necessities of war can make humans anonymous as soldiers, but they cannot destroy the symbol of human entity. Unless it is the testimony of total man, war literature is merely a documentary expression of feeling and intelligence, indifference and mental inferiority, related to social, political, economic problems. War is life in the grip of death. *This is the real issue of war literature.* Great writers know how to re-echo the Bible's statement that "man's conscience is the lamp of the Eternal, flashing into his inmost soul." Because great writers know how to give form to distress and relief, the magic of their own ability enters into our own life when we understand their works. Poems or tragedies written 2,500 years ago or written day before yesterday whisper or sing to the man the mystery of life. Thus war, of which so much is sinister or confusing, achieves grandeur through expression.

II

While most warbooks of today affect one like marginal notes of contemporary destiny, real literary works, produced in the past or in modern times, point out the highways and sideroads to an understanding of man's place in the universe. There were too many depressing periods in the history of mankind when not merely sense but the yearning for sense deserted the human soul. Yet even then there were poets who fought the demon of life, though their own private lives showed a dangerous disbalance. The creative mind may be unfaithful to experiences, but cannot be untrustworthy to the need of expressing them. Neither wars, nor the indifference of the public, allows honest poets or writers to gamble away their ability. In carrying out their part of responsibility, works of classical or romantic value become cor-

related with man's permanent problems, independent of the time-liness of the subject. There are examples of unchangeable human traits in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* or in Vergil's *Aeneid* which expressed in a poetic language, preserved for posterity a *feeling of actuality*, despite difference in time and space, taste and behavior, conception of simplicity and complications.

It does not require much effort to be an amateur-Jeremiah or an imitation—Cassandra. It is plain that the arid or wrecked human spirit rarely, perhaps never, realizes the boldness and courage of the creative mind when it introduces meaning into the seeming or real meaninglessness of things and events. Much of war literature is *histoire scandaleuse* in its private reference. Talleyrand's versatility and uncanny adaptability revealed the spirit of a diplomatic Proteus; his clerical and anti-clerical activities, his adjustment to Napoleon and then to the Bourbons, his success at the Congress of Vienna showed the absolute unscrupulousness of an engaging personality. Unfortunately much of war literature, especially under the surveillance of certain interests, has the same flexibility that was the secret of Talleyrand's career. Meaning, thus obtained, places expression on the level of a principle which refuses to recognize truth, and accentuates man's lasting relationship to corruption. "Official" biographies of Frederick the Great in Hohenzollern Germany or Empress Catherine in Romanoff Russia, the interpretations of their relation to war, stress an attitude which is, as a rule, unaided by truth or by a desire for truth.

When, however, the creative spirit is aroused by the form and externals of warfare, the urge to expression has the conscience of a dream and not of a scheme. It follows from the very nature of creative expression that it must conquer formlessness. When a poet lies, which he is apt to do, he must lie for the sake of truth. Lying in such instance is identical with unlearning the lessons that facts bring home, in order to arrange the pattern of experiences, so that their symbolism should unfold the essence of the struggle. According to Christian views man is charged with a duty that should be the glorification of God. The value

of this glorification is in direct proportion to the symbol that the value of man's life suggests. The poet's battle with love through self-love, this strange fusion of selfishness and disinterestedness, indicates a position in regard to the universe that does not accept dullness, dreariness or disaster as the only answers to the enigmatic question whether there is purpose in life. Creative integrity cannot be entranced with Machiavellism, or with strife that is politically or commercially capitalized. Creative expression begets meaning, which pragmatism might exhaust, but vision sustains. It pays homage to the essence of existence by obeying the maskless demand of imaginative awareness.

Without this concept of creative function it would be impossible to understand the clarity or the controlled complexity of great poetic works, thematically related to confusion, bloodshed, barbarism, lamentation, active shrewdness and slyness. Expression and form, as understood by Benedetto Croce, are knowledge obtained through intuition and representation. But the words of the Italian philosopher affirm a will that transcends the practical spirit, though he himself associates will with the practical spirit. If it is true that the activity of judgment that criticizes and recognizes the beautiful is identical with what produces it, then it should be also true that creative activity which recognizes and expresses a new experience, is beauty itself. Consequently beauty, being form, compels destruction or disintegration to possess meaning that a self-evident plot, not expressed artistically, does not possess. For instance, distinction must be made between war which agitates the human spirit because of its heroism or horror, and between an artistic interpretation of war which interests the human spirit because heroism or horror were made universally significant.

Cartesian philosophy attributes imagination to man's animal emotionalism. This implication is only then valid when it recognizes imagination's relationship to the intellect, the latter functioning as an aesthetic disciplinarian of feeling integrated by imagination. Poetic communication is an utterance of the spirit that knows no substitute for this particular activity. It has

meaning by being what it is, regardless of what view the poet takes of the action or of the character that he describes. Achilles is a glorified bully; Homer made him significant through characterization that awakened our understanding for the primitive Greek concept of heroism. No rational explanation could replace poetic revelation. Tolstoy's Napoleon in *War and Peace* is less omnipotent than history has made him. In the Russian writer's extraordinary psychological portrait he is a man of obnoxious principles obsessed with a sense of power which made of him an undesirable phenomenon of human history. Literary genius challenged history in exchange for truth.

Life and death are appearances. Of course, there are scientific, imaginative, and purely human adventures from which life and death emerge as a symbol of myth or purpose. It is desire for meaning that makes us cross the boundaries of appearances. One cannot, however, stress sufficiently the view that imagination in itself does not signify meaning; this task is performed by imagination creatively used. It is for this reason that a creative assimilation of war-experience is more than a report of war-activities; it is psychology aesthetically made authentic.

III

Scholarly works about history, hence about warfares, have values which no one of common sense will deny. For instance *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon or *The French Revolution* by Thomas Carlyle are the kind of interpretation that are symbolic of a powerful arranged material of history. Erudition and selection make them effective. They bring forth informations in a manner of factual authenticity that one misses in imaginative works. They are able to move and to enlighten the reader. They seem to encompass the universe with chains of factual intelligence within which humanity must confess its imperfections and ambitions. In contrast to the disorganized character of many everyday experiences they show order, concentration, symmetry.

Yet the *living voice* of human destiny is not made audible through them. Unlike history, imaginative literature takes care of human traits which, in an ironic sense, scholarliness could not consider of enough importance to be included into historical works. "Military glory" interpreted by a historian is quite different from the rapture or resignation of man in relationship, let us say, to the solitude of his own soul. Aristotle's dictum as to the superiority of poetry over history might be too strong a statement, but it suggests a demarcation line between these two expressions which is an occasion for trying to understand the reason, if not the quality, of difference. It is the difference of accent. History is the outgrowth of a need for information. It is also the outgrowth of an unemotional (scientific) wish to penetrate into the past and by projecting historical facts to extend understanding to other nations, besides our own. There are philosophical views which maintain that man is history.

Imaginative literature is as old as the first song of man, whereas history is as old as the first theory that man evolved. Evidently the source of songs is older. The basis of every creative expression is the song; the lyrical cry of man, his naïvete and undeveloped curiosity. The song is man's expression of an organic union between the joy of living and the fear of death. A song is vaster than the universe and more permanent than theories. It grows from inside and recalls experiences which the singer may not have ever had, and yet they seem familiar. A song is the religion of the senses. It diminishes the importance of facts and increases the importance of sympathies or antipathies. It is relentless in its strength and softness. Imaginative literature does not know more about life than history, but it suggests more. It is the symbol of the perpetual revolution of the spirit; it appropriates the cosmos in praising leaves of grass or falling in love with the infinite.

There are the attributes of poetry, behind which history seems to trail with an intellectual and factual conscience, sometimes generous and sometimes less so with poetry. Man does not ascend as a new being from the ashes of war. The wonders of life, the

simplicities of living, the monstrosities of life, the atrocities of living establish a variety of metaphors and conclusions in their creative presentation but never a withdrawal from the essence of human nature which is the eternal trail of the good and the evil before the court of destiny.

Man does not change, notwithstanding apocalyptic or other unusual experiences. This is one of the lessons, *this painful platitude*, which warliterature teaches. It is said that war leads to new inventions, that business gains, that it advances medical science and influences social structure. True. But the guiding principle of man remains his ego, infected, sometimes affected, by progress. The latter seems like a thrust of energy into inevitable inactivity. The dominant evidence of man's unchangeableness seems his willingness to succumb to slogans, implying mystical roots or the warmth of the herd instinct. Environment, climate, ruling views, the power or lack of power of the elite, et cetera, are, of course realities that cannot be excluded from the psychological atmosphere of warliterature; but in the strict sense of the word they are externals, without profoundly affecting the central disposition of man.

But the sameness of the human spirit as revealed by warliterature does not preclude faith in progress. Despair is not more legitimate than hope. The sameness of human nature is not analogous to immobility. Growth and development are not incongruous terms applied to the *homo sapiens*. Man can learn how to restrain himself; he can learn how to lean on reason; but substantially he cannot be anything but what he is. In every major literary work, inspired or irritated by war, one sees a renewed attempt to show man's inconsistency to nobility and ignobility. In the *Greek Anthology*, in certain plays of Shakespeare, in Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, in Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts*, in Leonid Andrejev's *The Seven Who Were Hanged*, in Andre Malraux's *Man's Hope*, in M. A. Solokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, (despite its "collectivism") and in other literary works, entirely or partly affected by war, one marvels at the recur-

ring motives of human behavior. Man is a miracle, unwilling or unable to respond to change in matters of fundamentals; man is a creature who echoes institutionalism, but never with such force as he echoes his unchangeable traits. War does not convert man to peace; peace does not convert man to war. The universalities and particularities of man, enacting their function in relationship to war, do not attain a nobler pattern because of social or technical progress. Granted that the tradition of Socratic awareness demands attention; granted that awareness enriched the nature of living; nevertheless, the psychology of war literature assures us that widened adventures and widened outlooks are determined by the qualities of human organism which stood the superstitions and tribulations of ages with fear, intelligence, and courage, but could not change the essence of their being.

Man's ghost is ignorance. War literature, while it is not promoting belief in man's essential change, supports the idea that knowledge assimilates ignorance. In a psychological sense war commands man to discipline fear through consciousness. War thus becomes awareness in action, by compelling action to be aware of its own purpose. Man's capacity to endure pain is immense. Embittered and tormented humans meet blind fate with defiance and fortitude. Man does not change, but war literature celebrates man's braveness and sorrow in proportion to ideals and interest that man is capable of understanding and fighting for. In mediocre or bad imaginative works the theatricality of plot and characterization or of bombastic lyrical outbursts is observable without any special effort; in good imaginative works we follow man's actions and reflections as an expression of his total being, regardless whether he gives way to feeling of a particular hatred or whether he reveals particular gallantry. Knowledge obtained thus brings a mental picture to the reader, resulting in a emotional identification with human valor and human suffering.

Whether one is interested in the Irish world of the *Cuchulain Saga* or in the Christian and Mohammedan world of *The Song of Roland*, whether one reads modern novels, like Jules Romain's *Verdun* or Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the

war-atmosphere of these creations helps retain one's sense of value that ridicules absolute indifference or absolute futility. Man is shown as an agent of his own will, or as a puppet of forces which he could not control, even if he would have the desire to control them. Man is exposed in his tireless integrity and in his selfish pettiness, in his enormous unimportance and in his important self. In epics of ancient times there is, of course, less rationalization than in modern fiction or plays; but good war-literature impresses upon the reader the magnificence and wastefulness of human energies. Great literary works related to war touch the innermost existence of man, and defy the nothingness of human life with a full and rich expression of actions and aims which are organically attached to the will to live and to the will to die.

by *Abbott Martin*

THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY A COLLEGE EXAMINATION

"Vain as their honours, heavy as their ale,
Sad as their wit, and tedious as their tale."

—LORD BYRON.

EXCEPT in love and religion, nowhere is mere information of so little value as in our enjoyment of literature. People who lack what Bagehot has called "an experiencing nature" no doubt consider information very important. It becomes for them a kind of insulation against experience. Being devoid of imagination, which is the means and instrument of growth, and having settled down in their own temperament, they cannot endure that increased consciousness which is the true criticism of life. It would confuse and disorient them. To preserve their identity, they must preserve their limitations. They turn, therefore, from the complex experience found in literature to the facts about literature. This ruse gives them an illusion of being able to interpret experience with greater ease. What is really happening, of course, is that shades of the prison-house of fact and method are beginning to close in upon and to circumscribe the mind. Undergraduate examinations must no doubt aim to discover the nature and extent of a student's information. But though information is a prerequisite, as Newman says, it is not the thing itself. And a comprehensive examination for students majoring in English literature ought not to be merely a more extended term or semester examination.

Teachers of literature, as is well known, have long suffered from what the lay psychologists call "an inferiority complex." Impressed by the solid and comfortable results of science; in-

timidated by the dogmatism of sociology, epitome of the ephemeral; lashed by the "school of education" that "measure" responses and appreciation, the professor of literature may well begin to doubt the wisdom of his methods, perhaps even of his objectives. In desperation he may adopt the methods of men seemingly more successful. But this is betrayal as well as failure. As Huxley said of the literary education in England in his own day, this sort of thing is not literature at all; it is only science in a very bad form. It ought to be admitted that much of the teacher's difficulty comes from the prevalence of the glib notion that a large number of young men can be corporately made into humanists. This notion has been both explained and refuted by Robert Bridges in what, to be sure, is incredibly bad poetry:

"The ground-root folly of this piteous philanthropy
is thinking to distribute indivisibles
and make equality in things incommensurable."

This popular idea of mass education reminds one of the early mass conversions to Christianity. But an educated man in name only is no more to be desired than a nominal Christian. Growth, like conversion, is personal.

The truth is that the different subjects taught in a university have different objectives, and hence require different methods. To teach them all alike is to teach only one of them well, and to give to that one pretensions it cannot sustain. Only the inexperienced or the incompetent teacher can fail to comprehend this. The English teacher's temptation to adopt the methods of science may be explained as the desire to "get results." More often it may be a desire to buttress his work against the criticism of men absorbed in the scientific method; as such it is a confession of uncertainty or lack of confidence. The sciences are tools, and very good ones. But the scientist is superior to his subject, *and in that part of him where he is superior* is to be found the realm and subject-matter of literature. The scientist's love for wife, his hope for his son, his dogmatism or his diffidence, his jealousy or resentment, his secret plans, these things make the

man as they make other men. To treat the artistic expression or representation of intense human experience as if it were science is grotesque. It is as if the butler in a matter-of-fact and colorless voice should announce the Holy Ghost.

"In energetic minds, truth soon changes by domestication into power." This power is the ability to interpret experience, and to use what we know. It is the poise, mental and emotional, that comes with consciousness. The ideal examination will seek to discover this power, and, better still, to increase it. Consciousness takes greater heat from consciousness than from fact and information. Any method of evaluation that puts the emphasis on information, on facts and dates, types and sources, movements and relations, will have the merit of being a reasonably accurate measure of—mediocrity. But the teacher's apparent success will be quite ephemeral. His student will always say "I have read that;" and fit it into a framework, empty of profit, pompous in pretension, and artificial in fact.

The ideal comprehensive will be oral. It is true that the student not sure of himself, as well as the uneasy teacher, may often prefer the refuge and security of a written examination. But the written examination by its very nature tends to encourage the use of an inert, channelized jargon, and the expression of received and canonical opinions. The oral examination will better discover the student's poise, and the resources and flexibility of his mind.

Nor will the oral examination wed the student to a form he is about to leave behind him, most likely forever. One of the happiest stages in a man's development is the time when he outgrows what up to that point may have been useful forms and patterns. I say outgrows, not frees himself by rebellion. There is a great difference between the man who outgrows form and convention and the man who rebels against them. The latter may be eccentric or bizarre; but the former is the sort of person we have in mind when we say of someone that his felicity of manner lies in being natural. Forms and patterns may be compared to compulsory military service. They provide a discipline, but they are not a dominion. The discipline will discover itself in our bearing, and we shall not go through life as if we were intimidated by the top sergeant.

by Harry Slochower

JOHN DEWEY: PHILOSOPHER OF THE POSSIBLE

"L'absolu d'aujourd'hui . . . n'est plus quiétude
mais agitation; l'Eternal est devenu passion."

—BENDA.

THE modern philosophy of liberalism with its concept of freedom arose with the dissolution of the mediaeval Substance. It was the voice of a renascent middle class which, persuaded that everyone could begin anew on a *tabula rasa*, repudiated feudal corporations and their aristocratic *a prioris*. In Nominalism and Protestant-Anabaptism it spoke up for the individual and the particular which had vanished in the universal spheres of Realism and Catholic doctrine. On the economic plane the fixed serf made way for the journey-man and merchant, as the laissez-faire doctrine of self-realization freed men from rigid state and church control.

As the mediaeval Essence of Being gave place to the modern notion of Becoming, energies held in check by feudal rigors were liberated. The universe appeared as an open and expanding domain. Time and history, money and exchange-value became the new universals. Spengler characterized this dynamic aspect of Western Civilization as "Faustian," and Wyndham Lewis condemned it as "time-obsessed." *Life*-philosophies, in which the historic flux replaced the Logos of Reality and process thinking supplanted Substance Thought, became the vogue.¹

However, freedom has never existed in an absolute form, since

¹Wyndham Lewis considers Bergson's notion that life is a streaming continuity without fixed divisions as "the creative source of the time-philosophy." However, the approach goes back at least to the Romanticists.

public regulations have always restricted liberty of action. It has ever been a question of range, and the range of freedom depends on the distribution of power. "In the last resort," observes Laski, "liberty is always a function of power." As corporate bodies developed, freedom was more and more contained. While Hegel's left philosophy endowed the historical process with ontological status, his right metaphysics held that temporal becoming was an aspect of eternal Being. As we move into the era of Capital Trusts and Labor Internationals, individual freedom in economics is largely gone. But as the form was retained in political parliamentarianism, there remained the illusion that corresponding social and cultural freedom still existed or could at least be achieved. The call for the restoration of Natural Rights continued after the social determinants had vanished.

With some liberals this has been a semi-conscious delusion to the extent that they demanded freedom of thought and criticism even as they recognized the existence of collective forces which barred such freedom. Where consciousness becomes more fully aware of this double book-keeping, it may well produce a kind of despair. In Nietzsche and the Expressionists the demand for individual freedom has already lost its confident note. In America Henry Adams gave eloquent expression to this dualism. He was in Edgar Johnson's formulation, "dialectically the last liberal." Adams clearly saw the check of corporations on individual enterprise. And "in a world," Johnson notes, "where contradictions could no longer be exercised in separate compartments, without clashing—and in a mind where the self-consciousness engendered of individualism forbade their conflict—they reduced their victim to impotence and confusion."

In his excoriation of Western time-obsession Wyndham Lewis fails, however, to note an important dialectical moment: the fact that philosophies of time in our day reveal their modern sceptical character by indirect acknowledgment that the concept of change is insufficient. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, for example, qualified the restlessness of the time-process, the one by his Platonic Ideas, the other by his theory of Eternal Recurrence. Spengler's tem-

poral cycles are braced by the notion of Simultaneity which constitutes the element of permanence in his philosophy of history. All this suggests that modern concepts of change are colored by partial homage to permanence. Bergson's conversion to Catholicism and Huxley's development towards absolute doctrine are instances in point. The phenomenon is also exemplified in writers such as Proust, Joyce, and the Surrealists whose initial time-sense was later modified by Essence-frames. In an article on "The Meaning of Change in Contemporary Philosophy," (*Science and Society*) Leo Roberts argues that because such philosophies fail to account for time and change in terms of some stable category, they are driven to invoke supernatural Absolutes. Thus, Lloyd Morgan finds it necessary to construct a *Res Completa* to bolster his pyramid of emergent evolution. Croce attempts to save the past by making it an eternal part of the present, and Gentile would cement his concept of Becoming with an eternal Now. One might, however, characterize this phenomenon by reversing Robert's formulation and saying that these philosophies account for time and change precisely by their invocations of Absolutes.

In America liberal thinking has stood largely under the aegis of John Dewey. His work is an attempt to reconstruct philosophy by denying the absolute character of things and events. However, as we shall attempt to show, absolutistic "compensations" appear in his approach as well.

The incidence of Dewey's thinking breaks with the metaphysical quest for monistic systems. His argument is that metaphysicians have isolated one aspect of experience, or one element of the universe, and treated it as *the* real, thus taking the part for the whole. But their proof that a transcendental principle rules the Cosmos left truth and error, goodness and evil, unchanged in our actual experience. In fact, their "block-universe theory of social causation," Dewey argues constitutes "a betrayal of human freedom."

To counter this idea of force Dewey advances the notions of interaction and continuity. Truth, reality, value, depend on *the*

context in which they are found; and context reveals interdependence. Essence and existence, theory and practice, means and ends, body and mind, freedom and authority, are continuous with each other, interact and interlock. Now context, Dewey continues, varies with time, place, the specific reference, and the nature of the elements involved. The contextual approach shows that all experiencing is partial and multiple. Hence, philosophy's search for fixed certainties, rules and systems, is futile. Because they ignored the reality of the uncertain, traditional systems not only failed to render existence less uncertain, but also their bias in favor of an eternal Reality tended to perpetuate the existing state. Experimental pragmatism, on the other hand, denies absolute knowledge and final values, "so that frail goods shall be substantiated, secure goods be extended, and the precarious promises of good that haunt experienced things be more liberally fulfilled."

The time-sense in Dewey's program enters into his analysis of means and ends. The argument against the subsistence of Being is carried over to a denial of the subsistence of ends. Ends too depend on context, depend on means by which they are reached. Throughout Dewey replaces classical bifurcations by the idea of continuity. A limitless series bridges their dualistic chasms.

Interaction and continuity represent the process of reality. The tool for discovering the process Dewey calls intelligence. Intelligence is critical method of adjustment. Criticism, in turn, tends to be identified with philosophy itself, as when Dewey writes that philosophy is "inherently criticism . . . a criticism of criticism . . . the critical method of developing methods of criticism." In place of a *system*, philosophy becomes critical, *experimental method*.

Dewey's thesis, similar to James' "ever not quite," is that "the future is always unpredictable." In his thought the realm of possibilities is almost infinitely extended. "No one," writes Joseph Ratner in his introduction to Dewey's writings (*Intelligence in the Modern World*), "has ever defended the cause of possibilities more vigorously and more consistently than he. He has cham-

pioned possibilities in season and out." Following this lead, John Dewey's thought might be termed *The Philosophy of the Possible*.

In making change, continuity, and unpredictability focal, Dewey has liberalized the old metaphysics with its aristocratic separations into categories and classes. The denial of First Principles in nature and experience makes absolutist procedures indefensible. There is, indeed, direct connection between his concept of means-ends and his liberal program for achieving democracy by "consultation, persuasion, negotiation," and his argument that "democratic ends require democratic means for their realization." Both the manner and tone of Dewey's thinking have encouraged the give and take of discussion. Its attitude makes for psychological readiness to allow voice to the opposition, and thus makes it possible that we become the gainers from whatever positive and valid assertions the other side may advance. Above all, Dewey offers palliative adjustments to an imperfect world. Holding that *the* problem of existence cannot be grasped or solved, and that complete, lasting cures are unavailable, he would center attention on limited areas to alleviate the distress of finite man exposed to limitless hazards.

The strength of Dewey's position is generated by his naturalistic persuasion that value is not determined by pure abstract norms divorced from practical affairs, nor by subjective standards geared, at best, to a partial objective reference. His repeated emphasis on relating philosophy to civilization has been a salutary antidote to that ghostly metaphysics which shuns the compulsions of time. Dewey is the first important thinker, after Marx, to note that

ideas have been in fact only reflections of practical measures that different groups, classes, factions wished to see continued in existence or newly adopted, so that what passes as psychology was a brand of political doctrine,

and to argue that doctrines, in turn, are instruments for changing material conditions. He has consistently attempted to indicate the

import of existing practices on the problem of evil, aware that many of our ills stem from the fact that "we live in a money culture . . . that our technique and technology are controlled by interest and private profit." While sharp differences remain between Dewey and Marx, particularly on the relation of means to ends and on the question of a systematic theory of values (suggested by the comprehensive study of Howard Selsam on *Socialism and Ethics*), he meets with Marx in his naturalistic orientation and in his historico-social perspective, as when he observes that the metaphysical division between subservient means and liberating ends rests on "the social division into a laboring class and a leisure class, between industry and esthetic contemplation."

The open nature of Dewey's doctrine has made for various shifts in his own thinking. If, at one time, he appeared to stand for the *old* individualism of John Stuart Mill, he later urged that liberalism which is sincere in achieving its goal must today accept a form of collectivism. "Regimentation of material and mechanical forces," he writes, "is the only way by which the mass of individuals can be released from regimentation and consequent suppression of their cultural possibilities." The *new* individualism recognizes that "we are in for some kind of socialism, call it by whatever name we please." His own term is "functional socialism." Still later, under the force of collectivistic impacts, Dewey once again shifted his accent. "I should now wish to emphasize more than I formerly did that individuals are the finally decisive factors of the nature and movement of associated life." If earlier, Dewey inveighed against "pure" philosophy, he later acknowledged the appeal of "the music of ideas." In these instances Dewey responds to the various pressures of the day.

Dewey's moving and changing universe has been viewed as following the curve of American development in which feudal authority never took deep root, and as attuned to the genius of a young land which placed a premium on work, results, on the practical need of getting things done. In the absence of mediaeval tradition, this typical American philosophy is concerned with the

"business" of making history and not with the Substance view *sub specie aeternitatis*.

As we have noted, Dewey has occasionally acknowledged the esthetic function of philosophy apart from empirical verification. On the whole, however, and certainly in terms of his representative influence, Dewey is the recognized spokesman of a temporal instrumentalism. Thus, he writes in his recent book *Freedom and Culture*: "The only *ultimate* result is the result that is attained today, tomorrow, the next day, and day after next."

In *Experience and Nature* Dewey quoted Gilbert Murray's "the failure of nerve," characterizing the Greek return to supernaturalism. In his contribution to a recent symposium bearing this title, Dewey criticizes absolute principles which rest on a literal mysticism and supernaturalism or rely on personal insights and personal faith. Here Dewey performs a service in exposing systems, such as Fascism and its clerical and obscurantist adjuncts which bypass the critical faculty and seek central categories "outside of nature." This raises the question as to Dewey's substitute principles *within nature*. What does he mean by Experience and Nature? How does the function of his Intelligence differ from that of idealistic absolutes in classical systems? What is the meaning of Future which determines meaning? The answer to these questions brings us to the limitations of Dewey's scheme. Specifically, analysis reveals that: (1) The meaning of Dewey's central terms Experience and Nature swerves between denoting neutral, all-inclusive Absolutes (Being) and selected norms of value (Attitudes). (2) Dewey's Intelligence has the value-character of an absolute, idealistic category. (3) Dewey's attempt to unite his absolute, idealistic Intelligence with his relative, practical operationalism (which distinguishes his scheme) results in (4) a major dilemma in his program. (5) The resolution of this dilemma entails a mode of argument characteristic of the very metaphysics Dewey sets out to repudiate. To put it differently: Dewey would replace the old metaphysics by a naturalistic metaphysics of Experience and Nature in which Intelligence functions as an

idealistic regulator. The result is an equivocal mixture of traditional Idealism and Absolution with a new relativistic operationalism requiring metaphysical explications.

In many places Dewey's Experience embraces the totality of events and situations: "Experience denotes what is experienced, the world of events and persons; and it denotes that world caught up into experiencing, the career and destiny of mankind. . . . We mean then by experience something at least as wide and deep and full as all history on this earth. . . . Experience denotes whatever is experienced."

Elsewhere, and possibly more frequently, Dewey distinguishes various types of experience. There is ordinary experience and *an* experience. "We have *an* experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment." There is "first and immature" or "primary" experience, "content simply to enjoy," and "intelligently directed experience." And Dewey calls for "faith in experience" when thus directed. As used here, experience is not subject matter, but "method," a method which includes error, illusion, evil, confusion, as well as "that bent which keeps one from learning from experience." It is "the only method for getting at nature," and "intellectual piety" towards it is "a precondition of the direction of life and of tolerant and generous coöperation among men." Its value seems to consist in providing a base making possible scientific manipulation "for the sake of the direction of further experience." Morris R. Cohen, one of Dewey's most incisive critics, comments on this situation in his *Reason and Nature*: "The use of the word *experience* without any ascertainable meaning is perhaps the outstanding scandal of recent philosophy. . . . Without an alternative term to denote what is not experience it cannot have any pragmatic meaning."

²Dewey has attempted to show that he avoids the marshes of monism by drawing the analogy to the terms zero and infinity. To this, Cohen has replied that "zero and infinity indicate at least definite directions. They indicate which of two definite terms is to the left or right of the other in a series. . . . The term 'experience,' however, in Professor Dewey's thought, is equally applicable to everything that is an object of consideration." Cohen also argues that Dewey's anti-dualistic scheme involves a dualism of its own in that it sets up an unqualified opposition between classical final truths and pragmatic

The meaning of Dewey's Nature is, if anything, more vague. Although six of ten chapter headings in *Experience and Nature* contain the term "Nature," we have been unable to find anywhere in the text a clear statement of what nature signifies, apart from being a general framework for *all* existence. We read of "objective nature," and of the fact that life and nature are connected. We are told that man and organisms are *in* nature, and that consciousness is a manifestation of existence "when nature is most free and most active." Reflection is "a natural event occurring *within* nature because of traits of the latter." But history can be more truly known than mathematical and physical objects "because nature is what it is." Here Dewey stresses the *neutrality* of nature: it is neither rational nor irrational, neither good nor evil; it encompasses both the precarious and the stable, mind and matter, cause and effect. Indeed, it seems to represent the complete history of man and events, being even more inclusive than experience. "Experience is *of* as well as *in* nature. It is not experience which is experienced, but nature—stones, plants, animals, diseases, health, temperature, electricity and so on." Ratner interprets Dewey's nature as

an inclusive history of multitudinous ongoing histories, the comprehensive interactive continuum consequent upon the interactivities of an indefinite number of interactive continua of an indefinite number of general kinds."

But, if everything is nature, and no existence or event is outside of nature, what service does the term render?

Dewey seems to endow human nature with *valuable* characteristics. Arguing the case for Naturalism, Dewey writes that it is "human nature itself." Likewise, he would "release . . . the possibilities of human nature." And we are not sure whether he means any expression of human nature or only good human

norms. Cohen's championship of logical and ethical criteria within the historical flux of experience offers him a strategic post for criticizing Dewey's "anthropocentric naturalism" (Cohen's term). Cohen himself leans in the opposite direction, towards the eternal and cosmological. Our essay "John Dewey and Morris R. Cohen" (*The Thinker*, September, 1931) offers a juxtaposition of other features in their approach.

nature. The first meaning should lead to an acceptance of the very views Dewey is opposing, since they too are expressions of human nature. A clear distinction between desirable and undesirable human nature is not provided. The second meaning (as tested by "future consequences") introduces a difficulty of its own, to be discussed presently.

The meaning of Dewey's Intelligence is less ambiguous. It is used throughout honorifically, as a universal good, at least as "a better method than its alternatives." Dewey makes distinctions here, too, between individual intelligence and "organized," "collective," "corporate," "coöperative" intelligence. However, whether individual or social, Intelligence is a value. In its social form it is a greater value in that here it has the function of adjustment in group problems and becomes one with liberal method. "What I have called the mediating function of liberalism is all one with the work of intelligence." In Dewey's work intelligence occupies the highest value which brings it close to a religious force. "There is such a thing as faith in intelligence," Dewey writes, adding that this gives intelligence a "religious" quality which perhaps explains "the efforts of some religionists to disparage the possibility of intelligence as a force. They properly feel such faith to be a dangerous rival."

Ironically enough, the crucial position of intelligence in its function of regulating experience and in its rôle of liberal adjuster (ethical ends requiring ethical means) brings Dewey near to the very idealistic, indeed, Kantian systems which he opposes. Now, to be sure, the unique character of Dewey's thought is its attempt to interlace these traditional concepts with his pragmatic, futuristic operationalism in which reality is not constituted by thought. But the attempt to combine these two strains introduces a major dilemma to the extent that Dewey would give his operationalism a basic rationale, suggesting that if it does not aim at "final," then at least at universally broad aims. To clarify the nature of this dilemma, it is necessary first to analyze the implications of Dewey's futuristic norm.

Meaning, value, et cetera, in Dewey have reference to opera-

tional processes involving future consequences. The value and validity of things "reside in what proceeds from them." What the method of intelligence will accomplish "is for the result of trial to determine." But how are these consequences to be ascertained? What determines the temporal and spatial demarcations, the beginning and end of the when and where of "trial"? Above all, when do we *have* the future that it can be investigated for the consequences? The meaning of the future in the traditional as well as in Dewey's sense is that it is ahead of us. To be sure, the future becomes a present; but Dewey's principle of continuity requires that we look for further consequences which the "present" future produces in the "future" future. Similarly, means become ends, and ends become means for subsequent ends and means. And since the future, in Dewey's words, is "always unpredictable," it should follow that we can never know "the result of trial." Even in terms of Dewey's method in which problems are restricted to limited fields, we face the difficulty of agreeing on *which* consequences are to be considered *relevant*, and at what stage (shorter or longer view) we regard them to have been representatively gathered. Suppose we take the problem of evaluating the Russian Revolution. If one rejects an over-all norm, what is to guide one in the choice of which results are pertinent? One might give priority to the question of political democracy and free inquiry, another to economic security, literacy, and the peace program, another to the sense of individual and social worth, et cetera. Or, in terms of future demarcations, one might stop at the years of chaos following the overthrow of the old system, another at the stage of relative stabilization before the outbreak of the war, another at the non-aggression pact with Hitler, still another at the present effort to coöperate with all anti-Fascist powers, and so on. The criterion of consequences, tested by "the future state of society," becomes an elusive infinite. Nor do Dewey's terms "more," "growth," "expansion," "liberation from," help us in the absence of firm positive and superlative norms.*

*The Symposium on "The Failure of Nerve" has bearing on Dewey's position that rules should be treated as hypotheses, "to be tested and confirmed."

Cohen has characterized this approach as one which entails

being continually on the go, without regard to the places whereto it is worth while to go in order to stay rather than merely to pass through. . . . We in America are especially in need of realizing that perpetual motion is not the blessed life and that the hustlers may not be the only ones, nor perhaps even the first, to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Whitehead has gone so far as to call "pragmatic reason" the root of evil. Such reasoning is that which "Ulysses shares with the foxes. . . . (It) is reason criticizing and emphasizing subordinate purposes of nature which are agents of final causation." To George Santayana, Dewey is "the devoted spokesman of the spirit of enterprise . . . of modern industry."⁴ One critic (Randall) even sees in Dewey's use of the past as something to build "further" the germs of a power philosophy.⁵

In the course of replying to the criticism that his criterion of "growth" is lacking in direction, Dewey acknowledges that a man may grow efficient as a burglar, as a gangster, or as a corrupt

Interestingly enough, Nagel's essay which explicitly deals with this problem reveals, by its very clarity, the limitation of this position. Criticizing the God-hypothesis, Nagel asks: "What understanding of our world does a metaphysics provide which is compatible both with a design in the processes of nature as well as with its absence. . . ." But this question pertains to *all universal* principles, such as the canons of formal logic. Likewise, the scientific laws of motion explain both rest and movement, a limping and a straight walk. Nagel is, of course, right in pointing out that rational procedure is *self-critical*, testing the very hypotheses with which it works. However, this procedure, too, ultimately involves a hypothesis which cannot be tested. Nagel partially admits this. "No matter how far the question 'why' is pressed—and it may be pressed indefinitely—," Nagel writes, "it must terminate in a theory which is itself not logically demonstrable." He adds that scientific method therefore implies "perhaps only a temporary 'ultimate' structural fact." The "perhaps" is not explained.

Marx's characterization appears relevant here: "Modern industry never looks upon and treats the existing form of a process as final. . . . It is continually causing changes not only in the technical basis of production, but also in the functions of the labourer, and in the social combinations of the labour process."

The connection between motion and action as Absolutes and Fascist imperialism has been noted in the program of the Italian Futurists. However, Dewey's general temper stands in opposition to compulsive procedures. But the argument advanced by a contributor to the Symposium that the naturalistic position induces a liberal and tolerant attitude is contradicted by the tenor exhibited by some of its adherents, even as they claim that they do "not jeer at the mystical swoon of dumb rapture." There is no necessary connection between a given philosophic standpoint and a given individual or social attitude. As has been pointed out, both naturalists and supernaturalists are to be found in the Fascist as well as in the anti-Fascist camps.

politician. But, he asks, "what is the effect of growth in a special direction . . . for development in other lines? . . . The conception (of growth) is one that must find universal and not specialized limited application." It would seem fair to conclude that a state in which men "grew" in a manner making for complete individual and social harmony would constitute a "final" aim within Dewey's unfinished world. Similar criteria are indicated when Dewey interprets progress as "reconstruction adding fullness and distinctness of meaning," and values "as intrinsic qualities of events in their consummatory reference." In a section entitled "The Economic Basis of the New Society," he states that "the ultimate problem of production is the production of human beings. . . . Discovery of individual needs and capacities is a means to the end, but only a means. The means have to be implemented by a social-economic system that establishes and uses the means for the production of free human beings associating with one another on terms of equality." In such passages "fulfillments," "universal application," "consummatory," suggest final values within Dewey's experimentalism. Here Dewey approaches that final end which Marx called "human society," making possible "the whole human being." Dewey's realization that "growth" does not distinguish between cancerous and wholesome development leads him here to widen the sphere of reference to "universal" and "consummatory" application. Yet, if such application is taken seriously, there arises a basic challenge to Dewey's instrumentalism.

Two central prongs in Dewey's thought are that democratic ends require democratic methods, and that validity and value are determined by future results. In the first, the primary connection is the antecedent; in the second, it is the subsequential. It is our contention that if Dewey stands by the one, he cannot hold to the other, and his attempt to embrace both constitutes a major inconsistency in his thought. An example will make the point clear. Suppose that the present war results in a society of "free human beings." Judged by the pragmatic norm of consequences, the means employed would be validated, although they comprise

a violent war, and one fought, moreover, with the help of the Soviet Union which Dewey considers undemocratic. ("The end justifies the means only when the means used are such as actually bring about the desired and desirable end.") By the same standard, if the use of persuasive means results in violence, (one might think of Chamberlain's efforts to "persuade" Fascism) then this method has been proven inadequate. On the other hand, if the principle of persuasive means is made focal, then the result would have to be condemnable where such means are not employed; and this should include our American Independence, the overthrow of feudalism through the French Revolution or the abolition of slavery through our Civil War. In sum, if Dewey makes intelligence (as liberal method) primary, he cannot consistently adhere to his operationalism, and if he makes his operationalism primary, he cannot consistently argue that his persuasive intelligence is always a good. It also follows from Dewey's uncompromising opposition to final systems that he cannot consistently uphold democracy as an ultimate value.*

It has been suggested that Dewey's scheme offers a way out of this dilemma: Where persuasion results in violence, it does not point to its invalidity, but only means that the specific approach was not persuasive *enough*, and that wherever persuasive methods are *rightly* employed, the consequences will not be violent. Thus, one might argue that Chamberlain failed in his Munich mission because he did not use the most expedient form of consultation, that the results, indeed, show that this was so. Likewise, to the extent that violence enters into revolutionary movements, there will be a violent carry-over exhibited in subsequent development. We must grant that, in this form, Dewey's position is indeed unanswerable. But it is unanswerable only because it then takes on the character of the very type of metaphysical explanation

*In the theory of education Dewey's school takes a corresponding position. The teacher is to use "method" and impart "content." He must not "indoctrinate," apparently not even democracy. This point is well argued in Kenneth Burke's discussion of Dr. Kilpatrick's views in *The American Teacher*, reprinted in Burke's "Philosophy of Literary Forms," in the section entitled "On Dialectic." See Burke's reviews of Dewey's "Quest for Certainty" and "Liberalism and Social Action" in the same volume.

which Dewey repudiates, for this method "explains" *no matter what happens*. Temperate means are validated if they produce temperate consequences; if they produce intemperate consequences, the means can be said to have been insufficiently temperate. Similarly, if hard methods bring about undesirable events, they are condemnable; but even where the results are partly acceptable, it can be argued that they would have been *more* acceptable if softer methods had been resorted to. As a whole then Dewey's position offers a choice between an inconsistent instrumentalism and a consistent rigid metaphysics.⁷

This situation centers the difficulty in interpreting Dewey's work. One might also formulate the difficulty by saying that Dewey fluctuates *between partial and inclusive views*. More crucial perhaps is the fluctuation in the use of his major terms as *descriptions* of what factually transpires in the historic process of events, as well as *judgments* or *attitudes* about the valuable or desirable in the process. This fluctuation would seem to follow from his position that means and ends interact in a continuous sequence, the one constantly replacing the other.⁸ Now, means are necessarily partial, limited, specialized. And ends, as Dewey defines them, have "universal application" and are "consummatory." That is to say, ends are inclusive. But, when means become ends, they pass from a partial to an inclusive frame, and when ends become means, they are converted from an inclusive to a partial frame.

While the tenor of Dewey's own persuasions is marked by sincerity and integrity, the lack of firm norms in his scheme allows use (or misuse) for a justification of opportunistic shiftings. Let us take the hypothetical example of one who, say, was

⁷One of Dewey's followers points out that it is "absurd" to interpret Dewey's position as counterposing force to intelligence, that Dewey is only against "violence," that is, "unnecessary or unintelligent use of force." This, obviously, begs the question. The issue is simply shifted to when is and when is not force "necessary."

⁸"Every condition that has to be brought into existence in order to serve as means is *in that connection*, an object of desire and an end-in-view, while the end actually reached is a means to future ends as well as a test of valuations previously made." (Dewey)

a Marxist before 1933, who then became a Deweyite anti-Marxist, and later abandons his Deweyism for something else. In terms of "consequences," he points out that the successes of international Fascism after 1933 showed Marxism to be invalid, that his Deweyism (especially with an anti-Marxist tinge) was serviceable for a "progressive" program when anti-Fascism became a vogue with the capitalistic democracies. And, in the event of a Fascist victory, he could regard Deweyism as then devoid of "fruitful" consequences. We are not suggesting that shifts in position necessarily involve catering to fashion. But, unless one has firm principles, using "opportunities" may become simply opportunism.

When Descartes raised criticism to a principle, he sounded the Renaissance, middle class liberation from feudal forms. But where in Descartes criticism led to certainty, in Hume it issued in scepticism. Dewey's philosophy, too, is not free from scepticism. For it, knowledge can never be knowledge of the objective world or of ultimate values. In his recent *Logic* Dewey rejects both the logic of Aristotle and the dialectic as having a closed character. For him, "consequences, not antecedents, sup-

⁹Some of the articles in the Symposium on "The Failure of Nerve" use scientific method in terms which rule out the dialectic of weighted meanings. Positivistic method is, at best, neutral, that is to say, applicable to any system of values. Both Fascists and anti-Fascists use scientific method in the making of arms. (Dewey acknowledges this when he writes of "the neutrality of science to the uses made of it.") Positivism bars "scientific meaning" from all fields of ambivalence, overtones, shades of meaning. This should make philosophies which have recourse to a legory, metaphor, analogy (and that includes Plato, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Marx, Santayana, Whitehead, among others) unscientific. In the realm of human, social, and particularly artistic concern, participation or identification is indispensable for knowledge. It is only verbally true to say, as Nagel does, that "to know the factors and conditions of a human transaction is not the same as to participate in its joys and sorrows." In certain fields, esthetic criticism especially, "participation" is indispensable for knowledge. No artistic product can be adequately represented by a forensic approach. In artistic judgment, identification with the *sensuous* character of the specific material, and with the concretized *process* by which the point of view is reached are crucial for knowing. Here, the dialectic overlap makes the precision of mathematical formulation impossible. To define science in terms of such exactitude is to limit it. It is interesting to note that Peirce, the acknowledged inspirer of the pragmatic method, held that the more exact the experiment, the more it confirms chance and probable error (his principle of "Tychism").

The dialectic does not deny the value of scientific analysis which breaks up

ply meaning and truth." This is a denial that tradition can supply us with the meaning of man's way. "Change rather than fixity," he writes, "is now a measure of 'reality'" and "aside from mathematics, all knowledge is historic." This is a surrender of "the eternal in man." It opens his universe at both ends, in assumptions and conclusions. In his war on frozen Substances Dewey dissolves principles into liquid operations. Noting the undesirable consequences of some systematic structures, he condemns all systems of thought. Despite its sobriety and practical orientation, this philosophy of release takes on the aspects of a free, liberal bohemianism in matters of primary concern. It is true, as Dewey says, that "the idea that unless standards and rules are eternal and immutable they are not rules and criteria at all is childish." But the notion that you can have a series of shifting principles without a leading Principle is no more mature. The metaphysical involvements which arise from Dewey's effort to wed his piece-meal instrumentalism to his inclusive intelligence are due to the absence of a *substantive dialectic* in which specific conditions determine the nature of means, but in which means are used with a view towards an ultimate goal. Seen as an isolated finality, a particular act may lead to undesirable consequences. In long range terms, it may be the dialectical lever for the attainment of all-embracing harmony. All this points to the need for a union between our Western heritage of freedom and change with the more traditional concept of Law and Permanence. The alternative, suggested by both academic Aristotelians and non-academic Marxists is a system of primary categories reached

the object into parts. The question is whether for completer knowledge (at least in certain fields) a further step is not required; whether the very efficiency obtained by reduction to a uniform neutral denominator is not won at the cost of inefficiency with regard to the organic connection among the parts—a connection which constitutes their qualitative character. The Goethe-Newton controversy over color illustrates the point. If Goethe was wrong in claiming that his non-mathematical approach exhausted the ways of knowing color, he was right in insisting that in breaking up color into mathematical units did not constitute knowledge of color-quality. Actually the differences of perspective which emerge from this debate also pertain to the scientific schools themselves. The wars among scientists (the controversy around Eddington, for example) are an aspect of the more general social and philosophical discussion of our day.

through and constituted by the aleatory process of temporal change.

Here resides the meaning of the modern myth, from Goethe's Faust to Joyce's Ulysses and Mann's Joseph story: the concatenation of the recurrent grooves of man's way with their historic differentiations. It deals with timelessness which cannot be plumbed and with recurrence which makes prediction possible—a basic characteristic of science. All this means that the world can be transformed but not transcended. Naturalistic tolerance and a philosophy of the possible might consider a substantive dialectic as, at least, a "possible" orientation.

by Curtis Bradford

FOOTNOTES TO EAST COKER: A READING

MR. James Johnson Sweeney, by his recent discussion of *East Coker* in the *SOUTHERN REVIEW*,¹ has done a service to those interested in Eliot. He has found the source of lines 28-33 in Sir Thomas Elyot's *Boke named The Gouvenour*. He has shown the influence of Eliot's reading of Heraclitus and of St. John of the Cross, writers to whom Eliot himself has called our attention in the epigraphs to *Sweeney Agonistes* and *Burnt Norton* respectively. There still remains much to be done before *East Coker* is as clear to us as the *Waste Land* or *Ash Wednesday*. An elucidation of Eliot's images and of the chain of association responsible for their arrangement is necessary to an understanding of any of his poems; Mr. Sweeney does little with the images and misses a good many links in the chain of association. He often pushes parallels much further than they will go. Like Mr. Sweeney, I am only interested in understanding *East Coker*; therefore I shall spend no time confuting his argument where I think it weak. I shall attribute to him by his initials (JJS) all the facts and interpretations which I borrow, and proceed to my own explication of the poem. The full elucidation of a major poem by Eliot comes only after the work of many commentators can be combined; perhaps Mr. Sweeney and I between us can make a beginning.

Readers of Eliot's post-*Waste Land* poems have had to face the fact that Eliot has been more and more drawing away from the renaissance tradition. While Eliot's technique grows easier for the English reader, because based more directly on the methods of the Elizabethans and the metaphysics, his poems become harder

¹VI, No. 4, pp. 771-91. Spring 1941. Mr. Eliot's poem was printed in *PARTISAN REVIEW*, May-June, 1940 and has been issued in book form by Naber and Naber.

to understand. The influence even of Dante seems since *Ash Wednesday* to have waned. *Burnt Norton*, *East Coker* and the *Dry Salvages* require in particular some knowledge of Heraclitus and of St. John of the Cross. The two aspects of Heraclitus' philosophy which have particularly interested Eliot are his conception of the experiential world as a constant flux and his concern with the Logos as the single stable element in the universe. The use of the Logos in the gospel of John ties Heraclitus' teaching into Eliot's Christianity. Eliot calls attention to both aspects of Heraclitus in the epigraphs to *Burnt Norton*. Eliot himself gives very precise expression to the penitential method he has taken over from St. John of the Cross in lines 117-29 of *Burnt Norton*, and lines 112-28 and 134-47 of *East Coker* (JJS). These general facts are necessary to an understanding of Eliot's later poetry, but not any very detailed knowledge of the books themselves. Altogether too much has been made of Eliot's reading; the poems may yet disappear under the bulk of documentation.

The title *East Coker* names the town from which the Eliot family emigrated to America, and to which during the course of the poem another Eliot now returns. The visit may have been real or imaginary, in either case it recalls to the poet an event in his family history which was at once a beginning and an end. The title, unlike the titles of the *Waste Land* and the *Hollow Men*, does not call our attention to the main image in the poem. What is this main image, or objective correlative? There are several and they have all been made familiar to us by earlier poems. The decay of western Europe (*Waste Land*, *Hollow Men*), the idea of purgation and penitence through the eclipse of earthly desires (*Ash Wednesday*, *Burnt Norton*), and the flux of appearances (*Burnt Norton*). Eliot has not needed a new correlative, for *East Coker* is a summary and re-examination of ideas previously developed. There is no epigraph since *East Coker* requires no new knowledge of us. (The passage from Sir Thomas Elyot need not be pinned down.)

I

Eliot has been playing with time in *Burnt Norton* very much as Mann, Joyce, and Virginia Woolf have for a long time been playing with it. Lines 147-53 of the earlier poem prepare us for the opening of *East Coker*:

Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
Not that only, but the co-existence,
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now.

In accord with his practice since *Ash Wednesday* there is a protagonist, probably Eliot himself. At any rate we are in somebody's mind; the poem is in the first person. The protagonist has at the outset coalesced his existence in time, "In my beginning is my end." This we accept as an expression of how he feels; it is not something we must understand. Next comes an expression of the cyclical nature of all experience (JJS), whether of the individual or the race, which ends with man gone and the field mouse in possession (the *Gerontion* and *Waste Land* note). The decay of a house—the original Eliot house?—seems to start the whole chain of association. In the second stanza, after a restatement of the theme "In my beginning is my end," the poet brings us to the here and now. The body of the stanza tells us that it is summer; the protagonist is in the country, standing in a lane and looking out over an open field. He has probably been visiting the onetime seat of his family. To the here and now the third stanza contrasts the Merrie England that was: the England which the Eliots left. Dancing figures from the long ago are reincarnated by the enchantment of midsummer night. Eliot has already in *Burnt Norton* contracted life's whole fitful fever into the image "dance". We are made aware of Merrie England not by dates, but by the antique flavor of the spelling. (Eliot's chain of association was probably from "dance" to the passage on dancing in Sir Thomas Elyot's book; Eliot's antique would

of necessity be genuine.) These figures of enchantment have kept time, too. They are dead; the flux has rolled them under. They are particular examples of the general statements made in stanza one. We began in the late afternoon; have gone on to midnight. The first section closes with dawn, which traditionally ends mid-summer night revelries, and which serves as well to bring us back to the present. The return to the present is marked by a single detail, the dawn wind at sea. The protagonist, having coalesced his existence in time, now expands his existence in space. "I am here/Or there, or elsewhere." Then the refrain "In my beginning". He is involved in the flux he is describing.

II

It is now late November; late November historically speaking compared to the England that was (JJS), the late November time-of-life for the poet-protagonist (cp. *Gerontion* and the "aged eagle" of *Ash Wednesday*). Two lines of general statement are followed by a rush of details which takes us through the seasons from spring to winter (from snow drops to roses filled with snow), and which links with section one by a reference to the dancers ("And creatures of the summer heat"). This leads by an easily followed chain of association to the cycle of the Universe. War in heaven, an echo of the present war, rushes the earth to the fire which shall burn out its present life before the second glacial age, a restatement in more general terms of the whole cyclical idea introduced into section one. This portion of the poem is in Eliot's earlier manner. We catch hints of *Gerontion*, *Waste Land*, *Ash Wednesday*; no particular parallels are intended, for when you run them down they add nothing to the meaning. In the stanza which follows, Eliot turns on this earlier manner. "That was a way of putting it;" a way which he now finds unsatisfactory. He attacks the problem differently, first admitting that he himself has not found the "Long hoped for calm, the autumnal serenity." He inquires what the value of age is, and denies the common assumption that the old are wise. Every experience is so new that

past experience does not help; the whole of life is a struggle through a dark wood. Old men are fools. They fear passion; they fear surrender (compare lines 95-6 with the dayadhvam-sympathize section of the *Waste Land*). Our only wisdom is the humility of *Ash Wednesday*. At the end the second is linked to the first section by a reference to "houses" and "dancers".

III

The idea of humility is with Eliot associated with the extreme humility of the penitent during the dark night of the soul described by St. John of the Cross; this association is the link between sections two and three. The darkness is first used in another way; the dark state of present day European civilization is pictured. The now familiar flux of appearances returns; much has been whirled away and much more will go. There is a danger that we will all go too. After this statement of the *Waste Land* predicament, the protagonist returns. The darkness of present day Europe has reminded him of the one hopeful darkness, the dark night of the soul (JJS and others):

I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you
Which shall be the darkness of God.

The poet is describing a mystical state, so he immediately helps us to understand it by three images: a theater darkened for a change of scenery, an underground train stopped between stations, and the activity of the mind under ether. After this attempt to describe quiescent waiting, the poet invokes it for his own soul in words close to St. John of the Cross (JJS). Here "all is always now," time ceases, and activity and quiet coalesce. We are carried back to the first section by similarity of idea with the refrain "In my beginning is my end" and by a reference to dancing. At line 129 there follows a vignette which evokes all the charm of the world of the senses; it is very like the passage in *Ash Wednesday* beginning "And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices." Note a significant difference. There the charm of the sense world distracted the protagonist from the ascent of the mount of pur-

gatory, because he was so recalled he was lost. Here the sense world is:

Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
Of death and birth.

The poet acknowledges that he has said all this before (in *Ash Wednesday* and *Burnt Norton*), but repeats it in a passage which paraphrases St. John of the Cross very closely (JJS). Eliot is more difficult than the passage he copies. He seems to say that in order to save your soul you must rest in God with complete humility. Lines 136-37 are particularly difficult:

In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,

Perhaps Eliot means: in order to get to real existence, to escape from non-existence—.

IV

In the fourth section, finest in the poem, Eliot uses precise images to restate the less precise language of the section just concluded. He again pictures modern man waiting for salvation. Our plight is movingly and passionately described. Christ, the "wounded surgeon", identified by the "bleeding hands" of line 130, works over us (JJS); the church, now a "dying nurse," continues to remind us that we are mortal (God first told Adam he was death-bound when he expelled him from Eden) and must perish before we can be saved. Our indifference to Christianity is reflected in the key images "wounded surgeon" and "dying nurse". We lie ill in a hospital of world-size, endowed by the bourgeois society of the last three hundred years (the "ruined millionaire"); all we are here promised for the future is the maddening paternalism of the totalitarian state ("absolute paternal care"). It is only through suffering in this purgatory, purposive suffering, that we can be warmed by salvation. Here, experiencing a second war of world proportions in a single lifetime, man's whole experience is a horrid travesty of the holy communion

("The dripping blood our only drink, etc."). The war involves all mankind in a collective sacrifice; it blots out nearly all the good in man, though this somehow persists obstinately. Our sacrifice must still, in spite of everything, remind us of Christ's sacrifice if we are ever to save ourselves ("in spite of that, we call this Friday good").

V

We turn in the final section back to the plight of the poet-protagonist. As an artist Eliot has struggled with words. The problem of the writer, who must make an art-medium out of words worn and battered by their daily use for every type of human intercourse from business letters to prayers, is feelingly stated. The poet realizes that what he is attempting to discover has already been discovered by Dante, Donne, and others—his masters. But he is not competing with them; he is only trying to recover the lost sense of man's spiritual possibilities. Conditions seem unpropitious, but at least the trying is something. "Home is where one starts from;" our true home is the unknown from which we came and into which we go. As one grows older life becomes increasingly complicated, though certain ideals emerge. We should seek not the moment of individual passion, but a lifetime—a whole cycle—of spiritual passion. Passion anonymous and communal. There is a time for experience and a time for the quiet recollection of experience (starlight and photograph album). True love is spiritual, not temporal. Old men (note the return to section two) should be explorers; they must be still (compare *Ash Wednesday*, section vi) and at the same time be moving on:

Into another intensity

For a further union, a deeper communion

even though it must be through the coldness and emptiness of the contemporary world so movingly described in sections three and four. As the poem is about to end with images of desolation, the poet recalls that his end, his death, is his true spiritual beginning. There has been a triumphant reversal of the statement with which the poem began (JJS).

by Robert B. Heilman

LIGHT ON A DARKLING PLAIN

IN a transitional era when certitude of any kind is rare among men there is some reassurance in the almost simultaneous appearance of books on education by Messrs. Hutchins and Meiklejohn.¹

For one thing, it is reassuring to find a distinguished university president and a distinguished educator (the term is here used literally and laudatorily) getting down to brass tacks. It gives one hopes for a profession singularly marked by mediocrity and increasingly pursued by ex-salesmen, ex-drillmasters, ex-politicians (drop the prefix and double the categories), students of "educational administration," and professors laureled for untiring innocuousness.

The tacks have points, too. The second reassurance is that important things about education are being said by men who are not only "big" but literate, who eschew pedagogical jargon and elude lurking clichés; who are precise, flexible, severe or persuasive as need be, epigrammatic. I quote:

Hutchins. "Today, though it is possible to get an education in an American university, a man would have to be so bright and know so much to get it that he wouldn't really need it." "Technology can give us bigger, brighter, faster and cheaper automobiles. It cannot tell us who ought to have them, or how many, or where they should go." "Russian communism is simply the logical prolongation of capitalistic materialism." ". . . the way to get ahead is to be safe and sound. Exhibitions of originality may make your superiors nervous." "In this country the moral equivalent of the

¹Robert M. Hutchins, *Education for Freedom*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943. \$1.50. Alexander Meiklejohn, *Education between Two Worlds*. New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1942.

old school tie is the bachelor's degree." "Freedom of thought is freedom from thinking." "Victory [in the war] cannot save civilization. It can merely prevent its destruction by one spectacular method."

Meiklejohn. "Human government is human understanding in action." ". . . the brutality, the aggressive exploitation of the weak by the strong, which we call Capitalism." "Liberty is only won by coöperative action. The theories of democracy and of laissez faire are flatly contradictory of each other." "Practical living cannot be well guided by an absence of ideas and customs." "Having nothing to teach, we have discussed chiefly methods of teaching it." "Gangsterism is not peculiar to Germany and Italy. It flourishes wherever men doubt the efficacy of reasonableness and intelligence."

A man writes as these men write because he has a disciplined mind, the logic to dissect and the imagination to reconstruct; because he is mature enough to grasp the ironic and paradoxical nature of experience; because he has the quality, moral as well as intellectual, which enables him to seize upon and insist upon realities, though men hate him for it. He writes pungently because he thinks pungently. The college-of-education producers of "educational literature" should read these books and then in penitence resolve, as least possible concession to a suffering world, never to labor forth another line.

Writing only a third as much as Meiklejohn, Hutchins can batter the enemy with a more unremitting polemic; in a fuller account of social and educational evolution, Meiklejohn has less opportunity for sheer brilliance. With Arnoldian jauntiness and polished banter Hutchins parades the futilities and contradictions to which our view of freedom has led us. Meiklejohn writes a carefully articulated historical and logical account of how we have got here. In either scorn or earnest appeal, Hutchins has a prophet's intensity and grasp of metaphor; Meiklejohn's method is more severely expository but just as uncompromising, and his habitual mildness of manner does well as a background for passages of merciless and incisive attack on modern failures.

II

Now for the metal in the tacks. The temper of it is shown by two almost interchangeable conclusions. Hutchins: "Either we must abandon the ideal of freedom or we must educate our people for freedom." Meiklejohn: "We will not get or give freedom until we know what it is."

To Hutchins, wisdom and goodness are the end of education because they are the end of human life. But today we find "the cult of skepticism," which by reducing principle to opinion opens the road to force; "the cult of immediacy," or presentism, which for wisdom simply collects data about the contemporary world; "the cult of scientism," which goes to science for everything, though science conspicuously "does not tell us where to go;" "the cult of anti-intellectualism," which includes, as inevitable fellow-travelers, Hitler and men of good will. Further, we live by materialism or "economic rationalization," which governs education and morality, and which, by subordinating the ethical and the political to the economic, contravenes human law and the law of society. This view of man as brute will destroy society unless we are saved by an education toward virtue and intelligence. But what do we have? Vocationalism; "useful information" (though "we cannot understand the environment by looking at it"); "history and the communication of ecstasy" for literary study; the neglect of the intellect. We must instead strive for "the common good as determined in the light of reason." At war, we must know and believe in what we fight for; only by the use of reason can we see that democracy depends upon the "difference between truth and falsity, good and bad, right and wrong" and that these are "objective standards even though they cannot be experimentally verified." Freedom is not freedom *from* something but freedom to "understand the order of goods;" it is means, not end. To produce free minds education must give them good habits and the understanding of what is good. The universities must engage in "candid and intrepid thinking about fundamental issues." We cannot otherwise, though we beat a dictator, save civilization.

Meiklejohn relates education to the disintegration of Protestant-Capitalist individualism, which appeared in a seventeenth-century England that chose to follow, not Comenius, who conceived of humanity as an organic whole and described a suitable education for it, but Locke, who by standing for tolerance in the field of ideas (relativism), Puritan individualism in morals (multiplicity rather than unity), and the social contract theory of the state (making a profitable prudence rather than morality the basis of politics) gave impetus to "the forces of disintegration." Matthew Arnold, with his attack on Roebuckism and dissentism, is the best-known critic of the world produced by a competitive, prudential, anti-political individualism. Rousseau had already opposed rampant individualism by substituting, for a lost Divine Will, a General Will to which education is subject. Yet he believes in freedom; he makes it valid and workable, Meiklejohn says, by replacing the Doctrine of Natural Rights with the theory that the state is both origin and guarantee of personal liberties.

But John Dewey, according to Meiklejohn's detailed analysis, continues the "false individualism of a disintegrating Protestantism." Opposing Absolute Mind, he treats intelligence, in his best known account, as merely a response to difficult situations—a troubleshooter of only sporadic action. He has crusaded influentially against absolutes, useless knowledge, aristocracy; but, when a crisis calls for a positive choice, such negativism helps little. Pragmatism has served "its pragmatic need." On the theoretical side, Dewey has tended to accept only science and, though inconsistently, to consider philosophy as "rationalization"—one of his best known positions, a sad basis for education. Philosophizing about the state, he sees only a set of competing pressure-groups policed by government; his treatments of democracy are inconsistent and negativistic. "He has a passion for democracy, but no theory of it," which recalls Babbitt's description of Deweyism as "sweetness and darkness." His immersion in chaotic individualism offers no sound theory for the state education of our day; beyond saying "Be scientific," he advances no theory of the critical, disinterested intelligence which our day conspicuously needs. Meikle-

john's handling of pragmatism may account for the intemperate teeth-gnashing with which Sidney Hook, in the *Nation*, assailed this book.

Meiklejohn himself works from Rousseau, accepting secularism as inevitable, rejecting "Natural Rights," the view that the state is only government, and that government is only a referee. He attacks all individualist positions: "intelligent self-interest," a phrase of "deceptive deviltry" used to "justify any crime;" *laissez faire*, which has given us starvation, conflict, meanness, cruelty; the whole practice of the capitalist business world, which views all life as savage conflict; false conceptions of freedom which give us "a press controlled by interest" and radio advertising which is "an insult to public taste and integrity;" a nationalistic jungle-world of its very nature denying the international law in the name of which we are full of pious horror about Pearl Harbor (in this observation Meiklejohn is very telling—and very courageous).

On the contrary, he says, the basic beliefs of our civilization are that we are brothers and that intelligence is an expression of fraternity (rather than a trouble-shooter, a rationalizing force, a plotter of self-interest); on them we can found a working secular order. "Intelligence is kindness," "the friendly wisdom of persons who are coöperating in a common cause." The cause is the continuous and authoritative state; the state is the whole body of "the people' *in action*," through government and informal agencies "seeking, by reasonable procedure, to promote the general welfare." ". . . friendship and reasonableness are two sides of the same human attempt to be civilized." Liberty is not "natural" but "civil," existing for no purely private pursuit, but provided and protected only by the state for the use of the state; otherwise it is license. Only a strong government can *preserve this general freedom against pressure groups*—democracy's answer to the fascist menace.

The state is reason in action; therefore modern education by the state makes sense. ". . . the state is the best of us, trying to control and to elevate the worst of us." It is reason, or no state. But there are states, and to avoid pluralism in education, Meikle-

john conceives of a hierarchical order summarized in the world-state, humanity. "Fundamentally education belongs to the world state." "Every human being, young or old, should be taught, first of all, to be a citizen of the world, a member of the human fellowship." All must coöperate in "the attempt at civilization." We must make a world-state. Otherwise we accept unreasonableness, use violence, destroy each other.

It is odd that the theorist of benevolence—not a sentimental, but a firm, logical benevolence, equated with reasonableness—should be portrayed by Sidney Hook as a dreadful old pedant-dictator knocking innocents senseless with a brassbound ferule. Perhaps, however, what we have here is historically inevitable—the Collectivist as Victim. A dying individualism, when its prophets and profiteers still have the loudest voices, will not love innovating forces, be they New Order or New Deal, religious or secular. A crucifixion-index of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will contrast in a most enlightening way with a similar roll-call for the sixteenth.

III

Though Meiklejohn's approach is political and Hutchins' moral and metaphysical, the men often come together. They agree that the crisis in education results from the collapse of a culture, from a "broken-down individualism"—a conclusion hard to question. We wander "between two worlds, one dead, The other struggling to be born." "With a superfluity of goods," says Hutchins, "we are sinking into poverty. . . . With a hatred of war we are now deeply engaged in the greatest war in history. With a love of liberty we see much of the world in chains." Social forces alone, says Meiklejohn, do not work. "They have given us starvation in the midst of plenty, conflict where coöperation might prevail, meanness and cruelty in place of fellowship and peace." We do not face Hitler with conviction, say both men, because our beliefs are too like his. That is our real danger.

What life shall we have then? Both attack moral leveling and the reduction of principle to opinion (in education, opinionism

leads to the "intellectual and moral chaos" of the elective "system"); such skepticism must breed violence, i.e., Hitlerism. Both attack our unprincipled and well-nigh exclusive pursuit of material goods, as a corollary of which Meiklejohn lists "bargaining internationalism." There cannot be freedom for purely private enterprise, says Meiklejohn, for "the forces of the marketplace" will not provide social wisdom; in Hutchins' terms, the economic order must be subordinate to the political. We must end the heyday of the individual will and the holiday of reason; we must change our hearts, and minds, ourselves. To Meiklejohn, reason is basic; to Hutchins, belief in reason is essential to democracy, which alone combines law, equality, and justice; law expresses peoples' "collective rationality."

Meiklejohn's insistence on the state as the only secular means of good is at times approached by Hutchins: "Human beings, to achieve their fullest humanity, require political organization. . . ." "The state is necessary to achieve justice in the community." Both oppose the theories that the least-governing government is best, that the state is a mere compromise among warring interests, or, instead of a coöperative enterprise, a game of cops and robbers. Freedom is not freedom from government. To Hutchins, it is *for* something, for the effort "to achieve the limit of our moral, intellectual and spiritual powers." To Meiklejohn, freedom exists when the individual participates in the decisions which affect the group. Hutchins keeps stressing the state as means; that is no state which "denies the proper end of the person." Meiklejohn agrees: ". . . the test of any government is found in the dignity and freedom, the equality and independence, of its citizens."

We must, however, note some difference in stress: Hutchins is more insistent on the state as means to human well being, Meiklejohn on the state as point of origin of human privileges. A lover of dispute might try to rig up a battle here, seeing in Hutchins a Protestant bias and a desire to make the old individualism respectable, and in Meiklejohn, an admitted secularist, a complete rejection of all individualism for a collectivist posi-

tion. But this would be to over-emphasize differences in approach. Both see that the health of the individual and of the group are interdependent and that there must be a fresh and more workable formulation of that interdependency, a political and moral coöperative. But Hutchins, as I see it, is more afraid of the fascist tendencies in America and hence puts more weight on the human being's search for intellectual and moral self-fulfillment. Meiklejohn is more afraid of the decadent individualism which has led to our present dangerous confusion and hence puts more weight on the social discipline which the individual must undergo to achieve self-realization.

So Meiklejohn is more inclined to insist on the relationship of education to social cohesion and continuity, Hutchins on the duty of education to produce "minds that are free because they understand the order of the goods and can achieve them in that order"—the highest being the personal or human good. Still the two come close enough, as abundant terminological similarity shows. "Civilization is the deliberate pursuit of a common ideal. Education is the deliberate attempt to form human character in terms of an ideal." That sounds like Meiklejohn, but it is from Hutchins. "... those principles of morality and intelligence upon which all theories of education must rest" sounds like Hutchins but comes from Meiklejohn. Meiklejohn says of reason that it is not the, "free association of ideas" but "the strenuous, desperate effort to get something right that has a powerful drive toward going wrong. Its most characteristic words are 'ought' and 'ought not,' 'true' and 'false.' " He might well be quoting Hutchins.

To Meiklejohn, reasonableness is the state, is civilization; Hutchins proposes, as educational ideal, "the common good as determined in the light of reason." Hutchins' casual clause "Since human nature is everywhere the same . . ." leads precisely to Meiklejohn's conclusion that "all human beings should have the same essential education." When Hutchins complains that we have plenty of information but little understanding, he states a problem that both face. Meiklejohn concludes, "The univer-

sity is an institution for creating knowledge and transforming it into intelligence." Hutchins says, "We must now seek not knowledge, but wisdom."

When the two men demand sacrifice, discipline, reason as the only way to win the war, regardless of the military outcome, we can see how far they go together.

IV

Hutchins is masterful in ridiculing the critics of his own pronouncements, the antics of academic "potentates" who frown on the Chicago activities, the "course-offerings" which an applied reasonableness would eliminate from the universities. Meiklejohn makes some very shrewd observations: that a weak democracy leads to fascism and that only a strong state can secure freedom; that popular knowledge of Dewey rests largely in the vague idea that pragmatism has refuted "once for all, some strange and old-fashioned ideas;" that our teacher-training makes teachers mere technicians; that no individual has the *right* to vote for a private or a sectional interest and ignore the general good. And so on, excellently, often brilliantly. But some questions need to be asked.

Meiklejohn's constant use of the term *Protestant* to describe our world arouses curiosity as to his evaluation of Catholicism. Does he regard it as an uninfluential anachronism? An irrelevance in the American situation? Or as a different thing only in name? Parts of the world-state-to-be, however, are Catholic and thus, in a special sense, "collective." How will they fit in? Niebuhr has observed that Catholic hostility to Russia in part reflects the fact that collectivism is secularized Catholicism, whereas the liberal world is secularized Protestantism.

Meiklejohn is worried about dualism in education—the pro-

²Cf. an E. M. Forster character on German universities in *Howards End* (1910): "What? What's that? Your universities? Oh yes, you have learned men, who collect more facts than do the learned men of England. They collect facts, and facts, and empires of facts. But which of them will rekindle the light within?"

vision of one discipline for "aristocracy," of another for everybody else. But is this situation of serious magnitude? I see a far more dangerous dualism: we give an actual mental discipline to the few who want it, and to the rest a comfortable hodgepodge of the substitutes which Hutchins condemns. The problem seems not to be to bring all the horses to the same watering trough. Educational politicians are waxing fat by providing immense multiple-faucet, chromium-plated troughs everywhere. The real question is: what is drunk there? The clear water of learning is neither much required nor plentifully provided. Meiklejohn recognizes the issue when he calls it "a colossal blunder to interpret upper-class education as giving only useless knowledge" and attacks the "interest theory of education" and the concern with method instead of content.

Again, he says, our state has undertaken to educate for freedom. In harsh fact we get two contrary results. On one hand: license. On the other: the public schools constantly produce an appallingly more severe conformity; public-school teachers notoriously cannot call their souls their own. In universities the instructor-for-freedom who exhibits much criticalness is likely to find himself facing budgetary retrenchment or a charge of non-coöperation. Further, one may have some doubt about Meiklejohn's vision of the state university as the exemplar for secular education. So far it has been a picnic for pressure groups and has been singularly lacking in defenses against educational quacks. Much more frequently than the private school which he rather prematurely labels anachronistic, it has become a medley of rooming house, hamburger stand, and information booth.

Our basic problem, Meiklejohn says, is the nature of the state, and he defines the state inclusively enough to be convincing. Still, are there not prior claims on the individual? Pre-political disciplines? Is not orderliness within-the-man a prerequisite to social order? Without it, we seem somewhat likely to have Hutchins' "man of good will" turned loose on society. And here comes up the issue raised by Meiklejohn's assertion that "all the activities which give a man dignity are done 'for the state.'"

If "for the state" means of direct, immediate political significance, the phrase alone will raise a hue and cry that will diminish the influence which a book of such direction and integrity ought to have. But if this is merely a compact way of saying that true dignity and honor are *not* conferred by even the most "successful" self-aggrandizement, which is indifferent to the public good but which so often, ironically, secures public influence and esteem, no one can cavil at it. Still, I think, there would be less possibility of honest confusion or deliberate smokescreens if Meiklejohn had gone on to specify that activities "for the state" are all those which aid the accrual of human well-being and wisdom, whether they crusade for some present, tangible objective or have but the apparently remote connection with the "state," as narrowly conceived, of philosophy or poetry or exemplary private behavior. Without such elaboration there is danger that any practical humanitarian will come out with a heavy burden of dignity, the scientist or the contemplative man or the inconspicuously brave man with none.

A related question arises from the insistence on the "cultural authority of the group" by which Meiklejohn is determined, laudably, to root out the licentiousness which operates behind the facade of "private rights." The group wills, but what educates the will? We always need extraordinary avenues to truth. Men of insight—artists, thinkers—must always, it seems to me, have special dispensation to question the group direction. In getting rid of economic license we must not get rid of poetic license. Group authority, like any authority, may go wrong, may be suicidal, and then you need prophets. Perhaps we may say that a group exercises a sound authority precisely because of the exemptions it grants to superior minds that are thereby enabled to provide the order with spiritual sustenance and renewal. The problem of authority always brings us to paradox. When authority goes, says Meiklejohn, education goes. True. But an excess of authority kills education. There must always be available for education all the extraordinary insights which may appear to contravene authority but which actually give it a firmer grounding.

That is, we must struggle toward a most difficult objective: authority without tyranny, flexibility without flaccidity.

Meiklejohn admits the possible inadequacy of a "pattern of culture" by setting up a hierarchy of patterns, of which the most inclusive—all humanity—exercises final authority. This point needs much more stress. Coming at the end, it does not adequately allay earlier impressions that he concedes too much to local autonomy and comes too close to the position Hutchins decries, namely, that morals are mores, or to what he himself terms "the sociologist's fallacy" and "the psychologist's fallacy." Under the authority of humanity it is possible to meet a strong necessity, namely, to introduce the rectifying force of the whole human tradition. On that Meiklejohn should insist.

But if humanity still will not be reasonable? When, at this hour, with chastening near-disaster not yet decently behind us, growing forces in England and America are clearly moving toward resumption of an unyielding competitive world order and the leadership itself toward what a Turkish editor sadly calls "the old game of diplomacy"—when so Hardingesque a light guides the return from the valley of the shadow, one may well, and without casual cynicism, have doubts. If reasonableness will not prevail, there is, in a secular order, no other appeal. And that brings up a final question.

V

Hutchins and Meiklejohn both want to pull the false whiskers off the undertakers masquerading as fancy-price specialists and to attempt a real cure for a world in crisis. Meiklejohn sees the trouble as already "in" the civilization by the time of Locke; he might more emphatically date it from the Renaissance. A half dozen times Hutchins is on the edge of a diagnosis of the breakdown of civilization, but he stops at description. Meiklejohn says outright that we must go from church to state, create a non-theological, non-mythical civilization, an authoritative secular pattern of life. On this prescription one would like to hear Hutchins, whose terminology indicates no such sharp break with tradition.

He speaks of the loss of religious belief, of the need for a spiritual revolution, and, in a context which suggests that he shares their emotion, of the shock which the founders of the University of Chicago would feel on hearing that "God is the product of wishful thinking." But there is no exacting commitment. Nor an explicit embrace of secularism.

Meiklejohn derives his new secular order from Christian tenets, arguing that they can subsist in purely human terms because they are ultimately of human origin. The Christian myth was secondary, he says; man created divine sanctions for those *human* qualities which he felt should exercise final authority. But one can also argue that only through myth did those qualities attain the imaginative grip essential to their becoming dynamic; that man "projected [them] upon the very nature of the cosmos itself" because he felt unable otherwise to secure their ascendancy.

With the myth, the cosmic order, gone, Meiklejohn sees collectivism (reasonableness) as the necessary, the only possible substitute. He argues that it is possible by means of two analogies: scientists demonstrate that men can coöperate, can "pool" their interests; the extension of spheres of comprehension by means of translation suggests man's ability to transcend limited cultural patterns and to enter into the most inclusive system of reasonableness—ultimately, a single human civilization. Again alternative readings suggest themselves: scientists, the products of a very special discipline, may not satisfactorily exemplify the qualities of the general; and the widening of horizons by translation is also an experience that comes chiefly to the special few.

No one denies the need of a coöperative world; nowadays book after book, of whatever persuasion, signalizes the transition from a competitive to an organic world; even the most Hooverjowed Republicans now twitter a little about it, perhaps with incomplete awareness of the potential disadvantage to private aspirations. The question concerns the auspices under which "brotherhood" will come into being. The world-state is reasonableness, of course; by that we mean that reason *approves* it; but we cannot guarantee that reason alone will *create* it. Meiklejohn himself speaks of a

way of life established "consciously or unconsciously." As yet we want evidence of man's ability to live by reason alone. Lacking verification, we resort to experience, and experience appears to indicate that man, when he gives up religious myth, takes not so much to philosophy and politics as to psychiatry and cultism. Rationalism alone looks less the instrument of a new birth than an index of "late megalopolitanism."

This is not to disparage the genuine utility of reason. But two reminders insistently press forward. One is that rationalism leaves the road open for the doctrine of rationalization, or of reason as an occasional instrument against troublesome situations. When turned loose, the critical intellect seems most likely to criticize itself and insinuate the utility of force. The other is that thus far rationalism, individualism, and materialism have gone hand in hand, different aspects of the same evolutionary progress from medievalism to the secular present. The problem is to rescue rationalism, if possible, from its evil associates, that is, to bring into being new post-Christian sanctions outlawing the individualism and materialism which reason has mainly served. To some minds, only a new faith, a new religious affirmation, will do (such minds Hook calls "tender." Sturdy fellow, Hook). Hutchins says we must "recapture, revitalize, and reformulate basic human truths." Decades ago Waldo Frank recounted efforts toward a new integration of life. Meiklejohn wants a human civilization, a united (reasonable) world, controlling all its parts. This is a brief, actually, for a secular religion. The novelty is reduced when we realize that nationalism, too, has achieved a quasi-religious status, though impermanently (its collapse, I am told, has led in Europe to a new "personal mysticism"). Meiklejohn, even in casting aside the theological, retains terminological suggestions of a religious order of life. "[Education] must believe something." The "modern" problem is always the relation "of inquiry to belief." Fascist madness springs from "a civilization which has denied its own faith." "If a man or society stops believing, it has nothing to live for, nothing to do, nothing to teach. This is the way of futility and loss of nerve" (a term now modishly

applied, in the metropolis, to an antithetical phenomenon). In his view an organic this-world can serve adequately as the focus and evocation of belief, can utilize and discipline reason, can exact transcendent loyalty. Perhaps so. Perhaps unity begets faith, is faith, be the formulation what it may. Perhaps from "chosen people" to "organic humanity" is a transition from faith to faith. Perhaps a secular oneness can be religion.³ If natural sanctions can replace supernatural in the moral reconstruction of man, Meiklejohn is going to have a spacious niche in a future Panprophetium. If not, he will be recorded as one of the last voices, and a very persuasive one, that accepted the imperative of a dying age and tried, with great skill and hope, to direct it toward a new vitality.

Hutchins and Meiklejohn both take an essentially traditionalist view of education but seek to restate it in terms more convincing than "what was good enough for the old folks is good enough for me." Hutchins boldly states that education must deal with moral and spiritual matters—courageous words these days—if civilization is to survive. Meiklejohn says the same thing in different terms. In reorienting education with reference to the world-state he makes it the mouthpiece of general human reasonableness, which is not found exclusively in past or present, nor is temporary, nor local, nor devoted to status-quo-ism, or dissentism, or successism. So both men derive education from the fundamental and the permanent. That is the only way to get us out of the hands of the quacks and the panders.

³Allen Tate remarks that man is "incurably religious." In Meiklejohn's terms, this observation might be restated thus: "Man has an incurable tendency to mythologize his perceptions of human value." If so, we may ask, will the formulae of statehood, or even world-statehood, provide adequate materials and stimulus for mythologizing? Can we get a Sermon on the Mount from the Bill of Rights or from those charters of brotherhood which seem likely—though now less than a year ago—to adorn the post-war bill of fare?

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THE UNITY AND DEPTH OF OUR CULTURE

LIBERTY is the most cherished possession and the most devoutly respected value of both the modern academic community and of our democratic society in general. It is right that this should be so; for liberty is not only the foundation of liberal culture but also the only basis for harmony in a pluralistic society.

There are, however, serious difficulties in the tendency of both the academic and the general community to have no other value of common devotion but that of liberty. If a society ever came to the position of being unable to agree on anything but the right to disagree it would disintegrate. The unity of society presupposes some common convictions and requires some overarching loyalties above and beyond the conflict of economic interests and party passions. Modern democratic societies prove, in fact, that they do not always have a sufficient fund of common loyalties to guarantee the healthy unity of the community. Sometimes such unity as is achieved is very thin because it must be based upon a very low common denominator. This weakness of shallowness and vulgarity in a democratic society is quite apparent in the content of the large scale instruments of communication in a democracy—that is, in the mass newspapers and journals.

The humanistic culture of our seats of learning faces the same twin perils of disunity and shallowness. Our colleges are able by their various disciplines to train minds, enrich the imagination, extend the range of intellectual awareness and fill memories with significant data, for all those who submit to their regimen. But can they finally give the student some adequate sense of the meaning of life and history? Do we have a culture broad and profound enough to bring various perspectives and various dogmas,

derived from partial and particular scientific and intellectual pursuits, into a meaningful whole? And does the whole, even when attained, do justice to the height and depth of man's existence? Is not the culture of our academic communities threatened by chaos on the one hand, and on the other by the sense of meaninglessness and disillusionment which arises from inadequate and shallow interpretations of meaning?

The chaos of our academic enterprise can be simply described. Every cultural discipline has its own perspective and its own mode and field of inquiry. Modern specialization has proliferated the number of disciplines endlessly. The prestige of the natural sciences, for instance, has greatly enhanced the tendency toward naturalistic metaphysics. It is natural for those who study the various realms of natural causation to incline to the view that the system of nature is the final and ultimate reality to which men must adjust themselves. It is equally natural for modern historical science to elaborate an either explicit or implicit philosophy of history in which the basic naturalism of our age is compounded with a view which does more justice to the freedom which man evidences in history; for man is something more than nature or he would not be able to "make" or remember history. This compound has produced the "idea of progress", the most dearly held credo of modern culture, and the article of belief which has come nearer to giving unity and meaning to modern culture than any other. It may be questioned, however, whether the unity which modern culture has achieved upon the basis of this belief is profound enough to do justice to the facts of human existence. Did it not lead us astray in estimating the depth of the crisis in which we now stand? Did it not betray us into a false estimate of the perils we face because it forced us to regard them as evidences of regression to barbarism, when they were in fact the characteristic corruptions of a mature and advanced civilization?

It may be observed that the political scientists have always dealt with the stuff of history which did not fit into the neat pattern of the idea of progress. They frequently added a touch of realism to the world view of the student, a realism which he

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could gain neither from those academic guides who falsely imagined history a mere extension of nature nor from those more abstract teachers of the humanities who thought of life as a pure exercise of reason. Yet the political scientists have increased confusion in our culture because they divided themselves, or were divided into schools of realists and idealists. The former found difficulty in avoiding the abyss of cynicism; the latter tended toward sentimentality. Perhaps we remember the confusion with which the college youth approached the tragic historical facts which culminated in the present war. Was not this confusion partly caused by the debate between one school of guides who told our young men that nations were selfish, and delighted in a sophisticated debunking of the moral pretensions of nations, and another school who persuaded them that nations might become altruistic or at least prudent in their collective egotism, once the modern educational process had fully developed?

Nothing reveals both the thinness and the disunity of our culture more than this perpetual debate between cynics and sentimentalists among those who deal with the historical stuff of man's political life, a debate which created a curious ambivalence between sentimentality and cynicism in our youth, and sometimes a curious compound of both attitudes.

At the present moment this debate seems to be resolved in favor of the idealists. At any rate the college world is producing a plethora of plans for world order and a world community of nations. The authors seem completely oblivious of the moral ambiguity of politics and unconscious of the fact that it is the business of politics to beguile, deflect, and harness collective egotism, as well as to repress or destroy it.

It has always been assumed that it was the business of either theology or philosophy to be a queen of the sciences and to furnish a synoptic view for the various disciplines of the school. Theology lost that position with the disintegration of the medieval culture with its authoritarian religious unity. Since all of the achievements of modern culture were made possible by our emancipation from that authority, no one would wish to restore so tyrannical a

queen. It is significant, however, that the religious quest has fallen to so low an estate in the modern academic community that a discipline which once reigned as queen is now not even permitted a voice. It might be maintained that, in the present state of religious insight, little could be added to either the unity or depth of modern culture by more emphasis upon religion. For religion and theology in America are themselves the victims of our cultural confusion. One part of the religious community preserves its faith in a hard shell of an obscurantist theology, either remaining ignorant of the legitimate insights of modern culture or consciously and perversely defying them. Another part of the religious community has been so pathetically anxious to prove itself intellectually respectable that it is in peril of sacrificing all that is unique and important in the Christian faith, for the sake of saying what any social or psychological scientist might say, with the addition of some pious phrases.

Since the dethronement of theology philosophy has usually been regarded as heir. But the heir has not always been successful in achieving any degree of prestige among her emancipated subjects or making herself heard in the babel of voices. Sometimes philosophy has degenerated into an esoteric pursuit which no one takes seriously. Sometimes she has been preoccupied with examining and polishing her own instruments of precision and perspective without ever finding time to use them. Sometimes the philosophers created a new source of conflict, disunity, and confusion, because one school of philosophers were so anxious to discredit the panlogistic and rationalistic illusions of their brethren that they fell into defeatism and cynicism. Is not that the significance of logical positivism? In this debate half-truth is arrayed against half-truth in terms quite analogous to the debate between cynics and idealists in the political sciences.

I have undoubtedly overdrawn the picture and done injustice to the creative and synoptic forces in our academic world. Professor Greene's essay in this journal¹ is an excellent example of the

¹*The Necessity for Spiritual Revival*, by T. M. Green, *The Sewanee Review*, Winter, 1944. This article and *Man on the Campus*, by George N. Shuster, in the same issue, represent Part I of the Symposium.

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breadth and depth in which the whole issue is considered by some of our men of learning. In him philosophy is performing its proper function of seeking a vision of the whole. It is, however, unique rather than typical that in his view of the total cultural situation the religious and theological issue should be raised. Our democratic culture is on the whole a naturalistic and secular one; and the academic community, even more than the larger community, has long regarded the religious question as *ueberwundener Standpunkt*.

This means that the ultimate question about the meaning of life is either not raised, or it is assumed that some system of rationality or causality is regarded as an adequate answer to the question of meaning. The classical religious faiths of the past, which modern culture usually regards as discredited (generally because they allowed the ultimate answer to life's ultimate questions to be used as substitutes for scientific and philosophical explanations of proximate questions and scientific analyses of secondary realms of coherence), are superior to modern culture in their appreciation of the heights and depths of human existence. They measure both the stature of the human spirit and the misery of human existence in deeper dimensions than modern culture. They understand both the majesty and the tragic quality of the human enterprise more fully than modern thought. They understand the meaningfulness of history better than the cynics; but for them history is not as simply meaningful as it is regarded by the sentimentalists. They may culminate in a faith in an incredible heaven; but they are an antidote to that even more incredible faith of modern utopianism: a heaven on earth.

There is no simple method of re-introducing the profounder insights of Christian faith into a culture which has discarded it because it believes life to be less tragic and history to be more redemptive than they are. To a certain degree history itself is destroying the credos of the eighteenth and nineteenth century: for twentieth century history is an almost complete refutation of the certainties of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It might not be too much to ask of the modern academic

community, however, that it apply its devotion to the cause of freedom by re-examining the very presuppositions upon which the modern cultural enterprise rests. The final test of a free culture is its ability to re-examine its own presuppositions. By that test modern culture has not proved itself vastly superior over the authoritarian cultural systems of the past. Yet there are indications that our freedom will finally be used in such a way.

For a long time to come, the re-introduction of certain ultimate questions into our culture will accentuate rather than diminish the disunity of the world of learning. Even if we should finally develop insights which will resolve the debate between cynicism and sentimentality, it is not to be expected that a free culture would ever achieve the unity of an authoritarian one. That is neither possible nor desirable. There can be a greater unity of perspectives by measuring the total problem of life in deeper dimensions than is now the case. The residual discord must be regarded as partly a healthy tension between various cultural pursuits which measure various facets of the complex whole of living reality. Insofar as it is not a healthy tension but potential discord it must be mitigated by a freer exchange and collaboration of the various disciplines and methods of inquiry in the field of learning.

by Clinton K. Judy

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UNEXPECTED LIGHT: ENGINEERING AND THE HUMANITIES

IT is axiomatic that public education reflects the dominant interests of the taxpayer; it is to be expected, therefore, that in an age of science and technology and what Mr. Nock calls economism, the comparatively useless liberal studies will be neglected. The humanist is, however, neither determinist nor defeatist, and is willing to fight even a withdrawing action. He has been of late testifying, sometimes with great eloquence, to the faith that is in him, and has been heard with more general interest than could have been foreseen. Unfortunately the public which has listened is inclined to agree "in principle" (ominous phrase), but is willing to leave the liberal tradition to those economically privileged young men who can afford to spend four years in the ivy college, or to leave it to the young women to whom it has already left the care of religion. This will never do. Time was when the doctrine of the saving remnant could be decently held, but no humanist dares hold it today, at least not in public. The values to be found in the study of literature, history, and philosophy are needed by all, and they are by no means merely decorative.

If the slow decline of esteem for the humanities has caused apprehension among educators, the present war has sharpened the alarm. It seems that the war is proving that machines, and men to manage them, are the one thing needful. Instead of going to college the boy of eighteen acquires as speedily as possible some mechanical skill, for essential industry, for army, navy, air-force. Will not the boy now fifteen or sixteen believe, and will not the

public believe, that science and technology are all in all? Will the humanities survive the war? A Platonist viewing affairs from his lofty eminence may excusably count as nothing the scraps of liberal education that a college now affords, so far have modern curricula departed from the ancient prescriptions. But there is ground which will yield another perspective, the ground of engineering education, and from there the prospect gives encouragement.

Not so long ago the engineering curriculum marked the total defeat of Arnold in his debate with Huxley, for with rare exceptions it offered not one course in any subject outside of science, mathematics and technology. It became immediately apparent that there was at least one study that had to be added, a course in English composition. The engineer has to make oral and written reports, and as public education now stands he does not acquire this skill in the secondary school. Freshman composition as an engineering tool can be and has been taught through the study of technical reports and scientific explanations, but it is not necessary to confine the method to such narrow limits. Fortunately the principles underlying good expository writing are the same whether the subject is heat-engines or representative government: the arrangement of material is made in accordance with similar laws of coherent development; the composition follows the same rules for clearness and force; the correctness of sentence structure is the same. At the freshman level there is no such thing as so-called "Engineering English." The anthology of essays on subjects that interest the intelligent public, on ethical, social and political questions, interests the freshman also, and opens windows on inviting prospects. Freshman English is the first step in liberalizing the engineer.

This minimum is now recognized in almost all engineering schools, and liberal courses have been added in varying amount; in economics, in history, in literature, and in philosophy. Perhaps a limiting case is reached where the engineer is required to devote one-fifth of his time to non-professional studies. To the advocates of liberal arts *à outrance* one-fifth of the curriculum

doubtless seems small, but room for even this much means displacing some technical courses, and engineering departments yield ground somewhat ruefully. Had we but world enough and time, they murmur. Fortunately it can be shown that the multiplication of special technologies has been carried further than necessary at the undergraduate level, and that some of them can be postponed until after graduation, the loss, if any, being balanced by the gain in intellectual breadth and maturity.

Today the time allowed to courses in the humanities varies widely, but it is increasing. The lead was given by a few schools which took an exceptionally broad view of what engineering graduates should be like. The general advance, however, is owing in large measure to the liberal attitude taken by the *Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education*, and for this every humanist should be thankful. The temper of the times, too, is changing: there is wide recognition of the growing importance of the engineer and scientist in business and public affairs; and there is a prevailing liberal and democratic sentiment that no man should in the interest of narrow efficiency be limited to the rôle of specialized tool in society. The engineer must know how to live, not merely how to make a living.

Because a man has shop to mind,
In time and place, since flesh must live,
Needs spirit lack all life behind,
All stray thoughts, fancies fugitive,
All loves except what trade can give?

The faculties of a school of science and engineering impose the curriculum, for it has never occurred to them that a student should be allowed to take whatever courses he thinks he would like or find easy. The student for his part accepts the imposition with fairly good grace. He has as a freshman already discovered and cultivated a bent for mathematics and science, and in high school has neglected the English courses and has probably taken no history; he therefore, in the cant phrase, lacks background and often finds the going difficult. Fortunately the freshman is an amenable creature, and is well endowed with natural cur-

iosity. Under a tactful and persuasive teacher his interest is caught. He soon comes to see also that outside the class room his friends are not much interested in chemistry, and he wishes to meet them on neutral ground. He resents Kipling's poem which classifies him as one of the Sons of Martha. When he becomes a junior or senior he is likely to welcome a course in literature as a relief from the long hours spent on science. *Adversis solatium*, as it were.

At a time when the University of California required of engineers not one non-professional course, Charles Mills Gayley, a great teacher and a true humanist, offered a course in Great Books to senior engineering students. It was a one-hour course only, and the credit for it did not count toward a degree, but Professor Gayley's eloquence and charm and love for literature filled his auditorium every Wednesday at four. Professor Gayley was interested more in these black sheep than in the many ewe-lambs that trailed him from class-room to library.

One new consideration may be added. The position of the humanities in the engineering colleges is being supported by Navy V-12 curricula for the training of engineering specialists. The Navy prescribes courses in English, history, psychology and economics amounting to nearly one-sixth of the total requirement for its officer-training program. Many engineering schools in the country are occupied with this program and they are not likely to miss the moral that the most rigorous of all possible training—that for the production of officers of greatest effectiveness in time of war—demands much more than technical proficiency. What is valuable for the leaders of fighting men is valuable also for leaders in the civilian professions.

To those who are apprehensive over the future of the humanities in American education there is then offered this grain of comfort; that in the inner citadel of science, the schools of engineering, the place of the humanities is being recognized.

by *Henry Norris Russell*
Professor of Astronomy at Princeton

THE BORDERS OF THE HUMANITIES

THE limits of humane studies are severely restricted by convention. As Professor Greene¹ puts it—without agreeing—"Mathematics, the natural sciences, and the social sciences are consistently excluded." It may be contended that this is an error. The boundary of the humanities seems to be much like that which separates the Near East from Western Europe. This by no means follows the political frontiers laid down upon the map: but it is usually—though not everywhere—surprisingly definite, and the observant traveler is well aware when he has crossed it.

Let us, in imagination, explore a bit of this intangible frontier of the humanities—not as official, or even unofficial, representatives of either realm, but simply as travelers watching the country with alert, though not professional, interest.

Our exploration begins on a transparently clear afternoon, upon the edge of the Grand Canyon, at some point where the visitor may look down into it and far to the side across the Painted Desert.

The stranger's first impression may well be the terror of the sheer depth below him. This belongs neither to the humanities nor to science, but to primitive instinct. Next often follows an intellectual bewilderment at so wholly unfamiliar an aspect of nature—expressed in the tale of the cowboy who, riding through the thin forest, suddenly pulled up his horse as he emerged upon the Rim, and called to his companion, "My God, Jim, something's happened!"

But the novice, as this bewilderment wears away, and the

¹*The Sewanee Review*, vol. LII, p. 1, 1944.

lover of the desert from the first, will lose himself and bathe his soul in a glory of color, incommunicable in words. Here is a direct experience of beauty which, when we turn from it to analyze it, is certainly in the realm of the humanities.

After a while, some one of our group may say, "Bend your head to one side and look again." Those who have never done this before will be amazed at the heightened vividness of the color. Now where does this belong? To unjaded experience, it adds wonder to beauty and is no less humane than before. But it is also a very pretty piece of experimental psychology. The images of earth and sky fall on unaccustomed parts of the retina, dulling the perception of form, and enhancing that of color. Moreover, long before this psychological explanation was known, this was an old artist's trick—a recognized and useful bit of professional technique. Shall we say that the psychologist's interpretation is outside the humanities, and the artist's practice is inside? The answer is not easy; but we are clearly near the boundary.

Another of our group is a physicist. He produces a Nicol prism from his pocket and says, "Look through this, and see as you turn it the effects of cutting out the polarized light." The effects, in intensifying or weakening the blue haze, are striking and highly interesting. But almost every one would feel that the unmarked boundary had been crossed. This is primarily an experiment in physics, and not in the realm of the humanities. Has this happened because scientific knowledge and method have been introduced? I think not. Carry our parable further.

If the visitor's eye is more for form than for color, he will be overwhelmed by the tremendous magnitude of the gulf before him—a vastness which dwindles him and his companions to insignificance. "The inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." Yet, pygmy that he is, he has eyes. He turns them on the opposite side of the Canyon. He cannot help seeing that, for some three thousand feet below his level, the walls are formed of horizontal beds of rock, one above another. Below these to his right are layers upon layers of rock lying parallel, but

tilted at a considerable angle, and bevelled off where the horizontal rocks overlie them. Underneath the lowest of these are massive dark rocks, shot through with crumpled veins, which are cut off abruptly where rocks of either of the first two groups are superposed. If he knows nothing of the history of our planet, he may turn away in puzzlement. But if he has a moderate acquaintance with it (not as a technician, but simply as an educated man) the miles of rock will be to him an open book. The black rocks are clearly the oldest—crushed, contorted, and worn down at last to a plain, before the land sank, the sea came in, and the rocks of the second group were laid down, inch by inch, in horizontal beds, as the base on which they rested slowly subsided, till they were more than two miles thick. Then they were tilted, broken, and upheaved into mountains, which were slowly worn down to foothills, and at last to a plain. Then the land sank once more, the Cambrian sea came in and the deposition of the upper layers began.

With the word Cambrian, I have added something which the visitor would have to take from a guide-book. All the rest he could see for himself, but he must be told that the basal rocks of the third group go back to what was once considered the era of the earliest forms of life.

Looking more closely, he sees that the land-surface upon which these rocks were laid down was not perfectly flat. Where the walls of the present inner canyon cut it, the section shows hills two or three hundred feet high. But the lower "unconformity" beneath the tilted rocks looks as if it had been cut with a knife. The older land surface, formed of desperately hard rocks, was worn down from mountains, not to low hills, but to a dead level.

If he can read this record, the visitor's mind faces an abyss of time far more tremendous than the open space which yawns before his eyes. Mankind appears in a new perspective. Does not this experience, and the knowledge which opens the eyes and the mind to it, belong to the humanities?

I have deliberately introduced one technical term into this description—and may justify this by an analogy. Another

traveler may look (as I have had the good fortune to do) upon that most impressive stronghold, the Citadel of Aleppo. He needs only his eyes to see the sloping sides of stone deliberately made slippery, the mighty fortifications of the gate, and the loop-holes to pour down "firebrands, arrows and death" upon the attackers. He may well wonder whether it was ever captured, and its historian may answer: "It has had many masters from Rameses to Allenby: but only once has it been taken by storm—and that was by Gengis Khan."

How much the names add to the mere impression of the senses!

Now the name Cambrian bears the same relation to the history of the Canyon that Gengis Khan does to the Citadel's. The traveler who lacks the knowledge to feel at once their place in the story lacks humane knowledge in either case.

But again the boundary is not far away. The names of Genghis Khan's generals, and those of the separate formations of the Cambrian rocks, are matters for the specialist rather than for the humanist at large.

In the same fashion the results of the archaeologist who determines the succession of cultures in a region are akin to the humanities, while the technique of his special studies may not be. If he succeeds in dating his sequence in terms of ordinary chronology, the results again are in the humane field no matter by what reliable method they were obtained, but the methods themselves are equally on the boundary, whether they involve the decipherment of ancient scripts, the study of tree-rings, or varved clays.

Where is the border-line, then? I make bold to offer one test. *The Humanities end where the shop begins*—not the shop where things are made, nor the one where things are sold, but the shop that we talk. Some objective examples of this have already been suggested. There is subjective evidence which is even stronger, as any man of science can testify from his own experience. It is very hard to look at advances in one's own field without a professional cast of eye—even though, for the matter of them, they may widen humane knowledge. Years of studying

the trees make it hard to see the wood, and it is easy to become absorbed in matters of technique.

One recalls Lutwyche's venomous description of Jules in *Pippa Passes*: "Up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into the group; by which gesture you are informed that the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, he has mastered at length! Good-by, therefore, to poor Canova."

It is rarely as bad as that; but the unsophisticated viewpoint is not easy to reach. Once in a while it comes naturally. I recall a group of astronomers—hard-bitten professionals all—who one evening discussed for the first time Hubble's paper on the extra-galactic nebulae—sent in to be read in his absence. Observational evidence and theoretical deduction were keenly followed, with unanimous agreement that the case was proved. These nebulae were really external galaxies, and the range of our knowledge of the universe had been extended a thousand-fold. Then one of us looked at a diagram and said, "They are typical Cepheid variables: that's just what they are doing." "No," said another, "that's what they were doing a million years ago." There was a minute of dead silence, while another type of insight replaced the technical.

Biology and medicine overlap still more "humane" territory with the most amazing wonders of all, and terrors, too—deadly things, capable of growth, and responsible for pestilence, yet inherently invisible because they are so small. Here the limits of the various disciplines are hard to recognize. A discussion which starts with electron-microscope photographs and raises the question, "Are viruses alive?" may end in a philosophical debate which leaves the hearers—and the participants—undecided whether an invariable, sharp distinction can be drawn between life and death.

A word must be said about the distinctive case of mathematics. Here we deal with pure products of the human imagination. The earliest form—geometry—was counted among humane

studies; but the present developments of the science are so multifarious, and so difficult, that no living man really knows them all. In one aspect, mathematical elegance, there is an element which is by common consent aesthetic, and by equal agreement the most esoteric of all forms of beauty.

The average liberally educated man will have little concern with this; but he will be the gainer if he knows something of the extraordinary feats of imagination and discrimination which have accompanied mathematical advance. Enough of these are intelligible without technical prerequisites to afford profitable incidental reading for a student of the humanities.³

Finally, we come to the wide realms where the boundaries of mathematics, physics, and philosophy overlap into a *condominium*—which is now by no means a no-man's land. The exploration of this region has led to revolutionary changes in established concepts such as simultaneity, individual identity (of an electron, for example), and even of causation. The physicist, still gasping from the effects of the forcible expansion of his own imagination, hears the philosopher beg him to build some sort of a trail—albeit a rough one—so that one who is not a trained alpinist may climb to this new land.

The plea has been heard. Such books as Jeans' *The Mysterious Universe*, Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World*, and Bridgman's *The Logic of Modern Physics*—to mention but a few, in order of increasing difficulty—open the way. They are not for lazy readers. One cannot approach their regions of thought as the tourist enters the Carlsbad Caverns, standing in a comfortable elevator. But, at least, the untrained reader, like the tenderfoot, may follow—not without exertion—a route which gives him some acquaintance with the place.

The guide must be competent. There are many superficial discussions and some tendentious and misleading ones. Bridgman's fear that there would be "an awful outbreak of intellectual licentiousness" when the uncertainty-principle was discussed by

³For example, Kasner and Newman's *Mathematics and the Imagination*. (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1940.).

the half-informed has proved only too well founded. But the same trouble is met with in would-be interpretations of the classics—nay, of the Bible itself. Forewarned is forearmed.

It may be maintained, then, that the important distinction is not between the humanities and the sciences but between the broad and the technical view of any field of knowledge or thought. To have at least some knowledge—accurate, so far as it goes—of the general results, and of the general methods, of the arts and sciences alike is a mark of the liberally educated man. The specific details, whether of methods of discovery or of expression, belong to the narrower society of his professional peers. This is in agreement with Professor Green's conclusion: "It will make clear that no subject is so humane that it cannot be studied and taught inhumanely, no subject so inhuman that it cannot be studied and taught so as to enrich and deepen human life."

by Allen Tate

TECHNIQUES OF FICTION¹

THERE must be many techniques of fiction, but how many? I suppose a great many more than there are techniques of poetry. Why this should be so, if it is, nobody quite knows, and if we knew, I do not know what use the knowledge would have. For the great disadvantage of all literary criticism is its radical ignorance, which in the very nature of its aims must be incurable. Even the aims of criticism are unknown, beyond very short views; for example, in the criticism of the novel, Mr. Percy Lubbock tells us that the secret of the art is the strategy of "point of view"; Mr. E. M. Forster that the novelist must simply give us "life", or the illusion of "bouncing" us through it—which looks like a broader view than Mr. Lubbock's, until we pause to examine it, when it turns out to be worse than narrow, since to look at everything is to see nothing; or again Mr. Edwin Muir holds that "structure" is the key to the novelist's success or failure. There is no need here to explain what these critics mean by "point of view", or "life", or "structure"; but they all mean something useful—in a short view, beyond which (I repeat) critics seem to know little or nothing.

What the novelists know may be another thing altogether, and it is that knowledge which ought to be our deepest concern. You will have to allow me the paradox of presuming to know what the novelists know—or some of them at any rate—while as a critic I profess to know nothing. The presumption might encourage us to predict from the very nature of the critic's ignorance the nature and quality of the knowledge possible to good writers of fiction. The novelist keeps before him constantly the structure and substance of his fiction as a whole, to a degree to which the

¹Lecture delivered in the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress under the auspices of the Writers Club, October 25, 1943.

critic can never apprehend it. For the first cause of critical ignorance is, of course, the limitations of our minds, about which we can do little, work at them as we will. It is the special ignorance by which we, as critics, are limited in the act of reading any extended work of the imagination. The imaginative work must always differ to such a great degree as almost to differ in kind from philosophical works, which our minds apprehend and retain almost as wholes through the logical and deductive structures which powerfully aid the memory. Who can remember, well enough to pronounce upon it critically, all of *War and Peace*, or *The Wings of the Dove*, or even *Death in Venice*, the small enclosed world of which ought at least to do something to aid our memories? I have reread all three of these books in the past year; yet for the life of me I could not pretend to know them as wholes, and without that knowledge I lack the materials of criticism.

Because Mr. Lubbock seems to know more than anybody else about this necessary ignorance of the critic, and for other important reasons, I believe him to be the best critic who has ever written about the novel. His book, *The Craft of Fiction*, is very nearly a model of critical procedure. Even in so fine a study as Albert Thibaudet's *Gustave Flaubert* there is nothing like the actual, as opposed to the merely professed, critical modesty of numerous statements like this by Lubbock: "Our critical faculty may be admirable; we may be thoroughly capable of judging a book justly, if only we could watch it at ease. But fine taste and keen perception are of no use to us if we cannot retain the image of the book; and the image escapes and evades us like a cloud." Where, then, does Lubbock get the material of his criticism? He gets as much of it as any critic ever gets by means of a bias which he constantly pushes in the direction of extreme simplification of the novel in terms of "form," or "point of view" (after James' more famous phrase, the "post of observation"), or more generally in terms of the controlling intelligence which determines the range and quality of the scene and the action. It is the only book on fiction which has earned unanimous dislike among other

critics (I do not know three novelists who have read it), and the reason, I think, is that it is, in its limited terms, wholly successful; or, if that is too great praise, it is successful in the same sense, and to no less degree than the famous lecture notes on the Greek drama taken down by an anonymous student at the Lyceum in the fourth century B.C. The lecture notes and *The Craft of Fiction* are studies of their respective arts in terms of form; and I think that Lubbock had incomparably the more difficult job to do. The novel has at no time enjoyed anything like the number and the intensity of objective conventions which the drama, even in its comparatively formless periods, has offered to the critic. The number of techniques possible in the novel are probably as many as its conventions are few.

Having said so much in praise of Mr. Lubbock, I shall not, I hope, seem to take it back if I say that even his intense awareness of what the novelist knows fails somehow, or perhaps inevitably, to get into his criticism. Anybody who has just read his account of *Madame Bovary* comes away with a sense of loss, which is the more intense if he has also just read that novel; though what the loss is he no more than Mr. Lubbock will be able to say. Yet no critic has ever turned so many different lights, from so many different directions, upon any other novel (except perhaps the lights that are called today the social and the historical); and yet what we get is not properly a revelation of the techniques of *Madame Bovary* but rather what I should call a marvellously astute chart of the operations of the central intelligence which binds all the little pieces of drama together into the pictorial biography of a silly, sad, and hysterical little woman, Emma Bovary. It is this single interest, this undeviating pursuit of one great clue, this sticking to the "short view" till the last horn blows and night settles upon the hunting field, which largely explains both the greatness of Mr. Lubbock's book and the necessary and radical ignorance of criticism. We cannot be both broad and critical, except in so far as knowledge of the world, of ideas, and of man generally is broadening; but then that knowledge has nothing to do specifically with the critical

job; it only keeps it from being inhuman. That is something; but it is not criticism. To be critical is to be narrow in the crucial act or process of judgment.

But after we gather up all the short views of good critics, and have set the limits to their various ignorances, we are confronted with what is left out or, if you will, left over: I have a strong suspicion that this residue of the novel or the story is what the author knew as he wrote it. It is what makes the little scenes, or even the big ones, "come off." And while we no doubt learn a great deal about them when, with Mr. Muir, we study the general structure, or the relation of scenes, or, with Mr. Lubbock, follow the god-like control of the mind of Flaubert or of James through all the scenes to the climax—while this knowledge is indispensable, I should, myself, like to know more about the making of the single scene, and all the techniques that contribute to it; and I suspect that I am not asking the impossible, for this kind of knowledge is very likely the only kind that is actually within our range. It alone can be got at, definitely and at particular moments, even after we have failed, with Mr. Lubbock (honorable failure indeed), to "retain the image of the book."

It sounds very simple, as no doubt it is essentially a simple task to take a scene from a novel apart, and to see what makes it tick; but how to do it must baffle our best intentions. Suppose you want to understand by what arts Tolstoy, near the beginning of *War and Peace*, before the ground is laid, brings Peter, the bastard son of old Count Bezuhov, into the old Count's dying presence, and makes, of the atmosphere of the house and of the young man and the old man, both hitherto unknown to us, one of the great scenes of fiction: you would scarcely know better than I where to take hold of it, and I have only the merest clue. Suppose you feel, as I do, that after Rawdon Crawley comes home (I believe from gaol—it is hard to remember Thackeray) and finds Becky supping alone with Lord Steyene—suppose you feel that Thackeray should not have rung down the curtain the very moment Becky's exposure was achieved, but should have faced up to the tougher job of showing us Becky and Rawdon

alone after Lord Steyne had departed: Is this a failure in a great novelist? If it is, why? The negative question, addressed to ourselves as persons interested in the techniques of an art, may also lead us to what the novelists know, or to much the same thing, what they should have known. And, to come nearer home, what is the matter with Ty Ty Walden's philosophical meditations, towards the end of *God's Little Acre*, which freezes up our credulity and provokes our fiercest denial? It is surely not that Ty Ty is merely expressing as well as he can the doctrine of the innate goodness of man in the midst of depravity. That doctrine will do as well as any other in the mouth of a fictional character provided his scene and his experience within the scene entitle him to utter it; but before we can believe that Ty Ty is actually thinking anything whatever, we have got in the first place to believe that Ty Ty is a man—which is precisely what Mr. Caldwell evidently did not think it important to make us do.

How shall we learn what to say about particular effects of the story, without which the great over-all structure and movement of the human experience which is the entire novel cannot be made credible to us? The professional critics pause only at intervals to descend to these minor effects which are of course the problems without which the other, more portentous problems which engage criticism could not exist. The fine artists of fiction, I repeat, because they produce these effects must understand them. And having produced them, they are silent about the ways they took to produce them, or paradoxical and mysterious like Flaubert, who told Maupassant to go to the station and look at the cab-drivers until he understood the typical cab-driver, and then to find the language to distinguish one cab-driver from all others in the world. It is the sort of *obiter dicta* which can found schools and movements, and the schools and movements often come to some good, even though the slogan, like this one, means little.

I suppose only the better novelists, like Defoe, Madame de La Fayette, Turgenev, Dickens, Flaubert, many others as great as these, some greater, like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, knew the special secrets which I am trying, outside criticism, so to speak, to bring

before you. There is almost a masonic tradition in the rise of any major art, from its undifferentiated social beginnings to the conscious aptitude which is the sign of a developed art form. Doubtless I ought to repeat once more that for some reason the moment the secrets of this aptitude come within the *provenance* of formal criticism, they vanish. They survive in the works themselves, and in the living confraternity of men of letters, who pass on by personal instruction to their successors the "tricks of the trade." The only man I have known in some twenty years of literary experience who was at once a great novelist and a great teacher, in this special sense, was the late Ford Madox Ford. His influence was immense, even upon writers who did not know him, even upon other writers, today, who have not read him. For it was through him more than any other man writing in English in our time that the great traditions of the novel came down to us. Joyce, a greater writer than Ford, represents by comparison a more restricted practice of the same literary tradition, a tradition that goes back to Stendhal in France, and to Jane Austen in England, coming down to us through Flaubert, James, Conrad, Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Ernest Hemingway.

It is a tradition which has its own secrets to offer; yet in saying that I am not claiming for it greater novelists than some other school can produce or greater than novelists who just happen. There is Meredith (for those who, like Ramon Fernandez, can read him); there is Thomas Hardy, there is even the early H. G. Wells. But there is not Arnold Bennett; there is not Mr. Galsworthy; not Hugh Walpole nor Frank Swinnerton. This is prejudice, not criticism. And these are all Britons, not Americans. I have no desire to play 'possum on the American question. Yet I am convinced that among American novelists who have had large publics since the last war, only Dreiser, Faulkner, and Hemingway are of major importance. There are "good" popular novelists who have done much to make us at home physically in our own country; they have given us our scenes, our people, and above all our history; and these were necessary to the preliminary knowledge of ourselves which we have been a little late in

getting and which must be got and assimilated if we are going to be a mature people. Possibly the American novel had to accomplish the task that in Europe had been done by primitive chronicle, *mémoire*, ballad, strolling player. The American novel has had to find a new experience, and only in our time has it been able to pause for the difficult task of finding out how to get itself written. That is an old story with us, yet beneath it lies a complexity of feeling that from Hawthorne down to our time has baffled our best understanding. The illustration is infinite in its variety. At this moment I think of my two favorite historians, Herodotus and Joinville, and I am embarrassed from time to time because Herodotus, the pagan, seems nearer to my experience than Joinville, the Christian chronicler of St. Louis. It is perhaps easier for us to feel comfortable with the remote and relatively neutral elements of our culture. Those experiences of Europe which just precede or overlap the American experience bemuse us, and introduce a sort of chemical ambivalence into our judgment. Joinville is both nearer to me than Herodotus, and less immediate. What American could not be brought to confess a similar paradox? To our European friends who are now beginning to know us, and who in all innocence may subscribe to the popular convention of *The Simple American Mind*, I would say, if it is not too impolite: Beware.

But the American novel is not my present subject, nor, thank heaven, the American mind. My subject is merely the techniques of fiction which now at last I feel that I am ready to talk about, not critically, you understand, but as a member of a guild. Ford used to say that he wrote his novels in the tone of one English gentleman whispering into the ear of another English gentleman: how much irony he intended I never knew; I hope a great deal. I intend none at all when I say that these remarks are set down by an artisan for other artisans.

Gustave Flaubert created the modern novel. Gustave Flaubert created the modern short story. He created both because he created modern fiction. I am not prepared to say that he created all our fictional forms and structures, the phases of the art of

fiction that interest Mr. Lubbock and Mr. Muir. He did not originate all those features of the short story which interest historians and anthologists. These are other matters altogether. And I do not like to think that Flaubert created modern fiction because I do not like Flaubert. It was the fashion in France, I believe, until the Fall, to put Stendhal above Flaubert. I am not sure but I suspect that a very tired generation felt more at ease with a greater writer whose typical heroes are persons of mere energy and whose books achieve whatever clarity and form that they do achieve as an accident of the moral ferocity of the author. But without *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, or without what it put into circulation in French literary milieu after 1830, Flaubert could not have written *Madame Bovary*. I do not like to think that Stendhal did this because I do not like Stendhal. Both Stendhal and Flaubert had the single dedication to art which makes the disagreeable man. Doubtless it would be pleasanter if the great literary discoveries could be made by gentlemen like Henry James, who did make his share, and who, of course, was a greater novelist than either of these Frenchmen; or by English squires; or even by Consultants in Poetry at the Library of Congress; but we have got to take them, as Henry James would not do in the instance of Flaubert, as they come, and they often come a little rough.

A moment ago I introduced certain aspersions upon a few English novelists of the recent past, but it was with a purpose, for their limitations, sharply perceived by the late Virginia Woolf in her famous essay *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, will make quite clear the difference between the novelist who, with Mr. Forster, merely bounces us along and the novelist who tries to do the whole job, the job that Flaubert first taught him to do. Mrs. Woolf is discussing Hilda Lessways, Arnold Bennett's heroine, and she says:

But we cannot hear her mother's voice, or Hilda's voice; we can only hear Mr. Bennett's voice telling us facts about rents and freeholds and copyholds and fines. What can Mr. Bennett be about? I have formed my own opinion of what Mr. Bennett is about—he is trying to make us imagine for him. . . .

"Trying to make us imagine for him"—the phrase erects a Chinese wall between all that is easy, pleasant, and perhaps merely socially useful in modern fiction, and all that is rigorous, sober, and self-contained. Mrs. Woolf, again, in speaking of the novels of Galsworthy, Bennett and Wells, says: "Yet what odd books they are! Sometimes I wonder if we are right to call them books at all. For they leave one with a strange feeling of incompleteness and dissatisfaction. In order to complete them it seems necessary to do something—to join a society, or, more desperately, to write a cheque."

That is very nearly the whole story: the novelist who tries to make us imagine for him is perhaps trying to make us write a cheque—a very good thing to do, and I am not sure that even the socially unconscious Flaubert was deeply opposed to it, though I shall not attempt to speak for him on the question of joining societies. Let us see this matter as reasonably as we can. All literature has a social or moral or religious purpose: the writer has something that he has got to say to the largest public possible. In spite of Flaubert's belief that he wrote only for himself, this is as true of *Madame Bovary* as of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Is there a real difference between these books that might justify us in setting apart two orders of literature? Perhaps; for the difference is very great between getting it all inside the book and leaving some of it irresponsibly outside. For even though the cheque be written in a good cause it is the result of an irresponsible demand upon the part of the novelist. But the distinction is not, I think, absolute, nor should it be. And I am sure that Sainte-Beuve was right when he wrote in his review of *Madame Bovary* that not all young married women in Normandy were like Emma: was there not the case of the childless young matron of central France who, instead of taking lovers and then taking arsenic, "adopted children about her . . . and instructed them in moral culture?" Very good; for it is obvious that persons who join societies and write cheques for moral culture are proper characters of fiction, as indeed all human beings of all degrees of charity or misanthropy, are. But that is not the point at issue.

That point is quite simply that Flaubert, for the first time consciously and systematically, but not for the first time in the history of fiction, and not certainly of poetry—Flaubert taught us how to put this overworked and allegorical cheque *into* the novel, into its complex texture of scene, character and action: which, of course, is one way of saying that he did the complete imaginative job himself, and did not merely point to what was going on, leaving the imaginative specification to our good will or to our intellectual vanity. (I pause here to remark the existence of a perpetual type of critic who prefers inferior literature, because it permits him to complete it. Flaubert understood the critics who, committed to the public function of teacher, resent being taught.) This completeness of presentation in the art of fiction was not, I repeat, something new, but I gather that it had previously appeared only here and there, by the sheer accident of genius: I think of Petronius; a few incidents in Boccaccio; half a dozen scenes by the Duke of Saint-Simon (the memorialists shade imperceptibly into the novelists); the great scene in which the Prince de Clèves tells his wife that he has refrained from expressing his love for her because he wished to avoid conduct improper to a husband; Emma Woodhouse with Mr. Knightly at the parlor table looking at the picture-album; countless other moments in early prose literature; but most of all that great forerunner, *Moll Flanders*, which is so much all of a piece in the Flaubertian canon that sometimes I think that Flaubert wrote it; or that nobody wrote either Defoe or Flaubert. For when literature reaches this stage of maturity, it is anonymous, and it matters little who writes it.

This is extravagant language. Or is it? It is no more than we are accustomed to when we talk about poetry, or music, or most of all the classical drama. The fourth-century lecture notes, to which I have already referred, some time ago licensed the most pretentious claims for the stage, and for poetry generally. I am only saying that fiction can be, has been, and *is* an art, as the various poetries are arts. Is this an extravagant claim? Only, I am convinced, in the minds of the more relaxed practitioners

of this art, who excuse something less than the utmost talent and effort, and in the minds of critics who find the critical task more exacting than historical reporting, which reduces the novel to a news supplement. Was, as a matter of fact, Emma typical of young Norman womanhood? Are the Okies and Arkies just as Steinbeck represents them? What a triumph for the historians when it was found that there had actually been a young man whose end was like Julien Sorel's! And is it true what Mr. Faulkner says about Dixie? If it is, is what Mr. Stark Young says also true? This, I submit, is the temper of American criticism of fiction, with rare exceptions of little influence.

Was it for this the wild geese spread
The grey wing upon every tide;
For this that all that blood was shed,
For this that Edward Fitzgerald died,
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
All that delirium of the brave?

If you will substitute for these Irish heroes the heroes of the modern novel, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, James, Joyce, you will see through the wrong end of the telescope the present condition of the criticism of the novel in the narrowing perspective of decay.

It is time now, towards the end of this *causerie*, to produce an image, an *exemplum*, something out of the art of fiction that underlies all the major problems of "picture and drama," symmetry, foreshortening, narrative pattern, pace and language—all those complexities of the novelist's art which Henry James, alone of the great fictionists, tried to explain (how much he coyly evaded!) in his famous Prefaces: problems that laid the ground for Mr. Lubbock's beautiful study. I am looking for something very simple and, in its direct impact, conclusive; a scene or an incident that achieves fulness of realization in terms of what it gives us to see and to hear. It must offer us fulness of rendition, not mere direction or statement. Don't state, says James, time and again—render! Don't tell us what is happening, let it happen! So I would translate James. For our purposes here it cannot be too great a scene, if we would see all round it: it must

be a scene that will give us the most elementary instruction in that branch of the art of which the critics tell us little. What shall it be? Shall it be Prince André lying wounded under the wide heavens? Shall it be Moll Flanders peeping out of the upstairs window of the inn at her vanishing fourth (or is it fifth?) and undivorced husband, slyly avoiding him because she is in the room with her fifth or is it sixth? I could find perfect *exempla* in James himself. What could be better than Milly Theale's last soirée before she becomes too ill to appear again? Then there are James' fine "sitting-room scenes," the man and the woman talking out the destiny of one or both of them: Lambert Strether and Maria Gostrey, John Marcher and May Bartram, Merton Densher and Milly Theale. Or there is Strether looking down upon the boat in which Chad Newsome and Madame de Vionnet, unaware of Strether's scrutiny, betray that air of intimacy which discloses them for the first time to Strether as lovers.

Yet about these excellent scenes there is something outside our purpose, a clue that would sidetrack us into the terms of form and structure which I have virtually promised to neglect. Let us select an easy and perhaps even quite vulgar scene, a stock scene, in fact, that we should expect to find in a common romantic novel, or even in a Gothic story provided the setting were reduced to the bourgeois scale. Let the situation be something like this: A pretty young married woman, bored with her husband, a small-town doctor, has had an affair of sentiment with a young man, who has by this time left town. Growing more desperate, she permits herself to be seduced by a neighboring landowner, a coarse Lothario, who soon tires of her. Our scene opens with the receipt of his letter of desertion. He is going away and will not see her again. The young woman receives the letter with agitation and runs upstairs to the attic, where having read the letter she gives way to hysteria. She looks out the window down into the street, and decides to jump and end it all. But she grows dizzy and recoils. After a moment she hears her husband's voice; the servant touches her arm; she comes to and recovers.

It is distinctly unpromising: James would not have touched it; Balzac, going the whole hog, might have let her jump, or perhaps left her poised for the jump while he resumed the adventures of Vautrin. But in any case there she stands, and as I have reported the scene you have got to take my word for it that she is there at all: you do not see her, you do not hear the rapid breathing and the beating heart, and you have, again, only my word for it that she is dizzy. What I have done here, in fact, is precisely what Mrs. Woolf accused the Georgian novelists of doing: I am trying to make you imagine for me, perhaps even covertly trying to make you write a cheque for the Society for the Improvement of Provincial Culture, or the Society for the Relief of Small Town Boredom, or for a subscription to the Book of the Month Club which would no doubt keep the young woman at improving her mind, and her mind off undesirable lovers. I hope that we shall do all these good things. But you must bear in mind that the Book of the Month Club would probably send her the kind of literature that I have just written for you, so that she too might take to writing cheques. Is there any guarantee that they would be good cheques? The question brings us up short against certain permanent disabilities of human nature, which we should do well to see as objectively as possible, in the language of a greater artist; which is just what we shall now proceed to do:

Charles was there; she saw him; he spoke to her; she heard nothing, and she went on quickly up the stairs, breathless, distraught, dumb, and ever holding this horrible piece of paper, that crackled between her fingers like a plate of sheet-iron. On the second floor she stopped before the attic-door, that was closed.

Then she tried to calm herself; she recalled the letter; she must finish it; she did not dare to. And where? How? She would be seen! "Ah, no! here," she thought, "I shall be all right."

Emma pushed open the door and went in.

The slates threw straight down a heavy heat that gripped her temples, stifled her; she dragged herself to the closed garret-window. She drew back the bolt, and the dazzling light burst in with a leap.

Opposite, beyond the roofs, stretched the open country till it was lost to sight. Down below, underneath her, the village square was empty; the stones of the pavement glittered, the weathercocks on the houses were motionless. At the corner of the street from a lower story, rose a kind of humming with strident modulations. It was Binet turning.

She leant against the embrasure of the window, and re-read the letter with angry sneers. But the more she fixed her attention upon it, the more confused were her ideas. She saw him again, heard him, encircled him with her arms, and the throbs of her heart, that beat against her breast like blows of a sledge-hammer, grew faster and faster, with uneven intervals. She looked about her with the wish that the earth might crumble into pieces. Why not end it all? What restrained her? She was free. She advanced, looked at the paving-stones, saying to herself, "Come! Come!"

The luminous ray that came straight up from below drew the weight of her body towards the abyss. It seemed to her that the floor dipped on end like a tossing boat. She was right at the edge, almost hanging, surrounded by vast space. The blue of the heavens suffused her, the air was whirling in her hollow head; she had but to yield, to let herself be taken; and the humming of the lathe never ceased, like an angry voice calling her.

"Emma! Emma!" cried Charles.

She stopped.

"Wherever are you? Come!"

The thought that she had just escaped from death made her faint with terror. She closed her eyes; then she shivered at the touch of a hand on her sleeve; it was Félicité.

"Master is waiting for you, madame; the soup is on the table."

And she had to go down to sit at table.

Flaubert-*Madame Bovary*, p. 235-6.
(Modern Library edition)

The English translation is not good; its failure to convey the very slight elevation of tone is a fundamental failure. It is not a rhetorical elevation, but rather one of perfect formality and sobriety. We are not looking at this scene through Emma's eyes. We occupy a position slightly above and to one side, where we see her against the full setting; yet observe how at the same time we see nothing that she does not see, hear nothing that she does not hear. It is one of the amazing paradoxes of the modern

novel, whose great subject is a man alone in society or even against society, almost never with society, that out of this view of man isolated we see developed to the highest possible point of virtuosity and power a technique of putting man wholly into his physical setting. The action is not stated from the point of view of the author; it is rendered in terms of situation and scene. To have made this the viable property of the art of fiction was to have virtually made the art of fiction. And that, I think, is our debt to Flaubert.

But we should linger over this scene if only to try our hands at what I shall now, for the first time, call sub-criticism, or the animal tact which permits us occasionally to see connections and correspondences which our rational powers, unaided, cannot detect. What capital feature of the scene seems (if it does) to render the actuality more than any other? The great fact, I think, is the actuality, and your sense of it is all that is necessary. Yet I like to linger over the whirring lathe of old Binet, a lay figure or "flat character" who has done little in the novel and will never do much, and whose lathe we merely noted from the beginning as a common feature of a small town like Yonville. I should like to know when Flaubert gave him the lathe, whether just to tag him for us; whether, writing the present scene, he went back and gave it to him as a "plant" for use here later; or whether, having given him the lathe, he decided it would be useful in this scene.

What is its use? James said that the work of fiction must be "a direct impression of life," a very general requirement; but in the perspective of nearly ninety years since the publication of *Madame Bovary* and the rise of the Impressionist novel through Henry James, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf, the phrase takes on a more specific sense. Mind you the phrase is not "direct representation," which only the stage can give us. But here, using this mechanic's tool, Flaubert gives us a direct *impression* of Emma's sensation at a particular moment (which not even the drama could accomplish), and thus by rendering audible to us what Emma alone could hear he charged the entire scene with

actuality. As Emma goes to the window she merely notes that Binet's lathe is turning—*C'était Binet qui tournait*. Then she looks down at the street which seems to rise towards her—*Allons!* *Allons!* she whispers, because she cannot find the will to jump. We have had rendered to us visually the shock of violent suicide. Now comes the subtle fusion of the reaction and of the pull towards self-destruction, which is the humming in her head: how can Flaubert *render* it for us? Shall we not have to take his word for it? Shall we not have to imagine for him? No: *l'air circulait dans sa tête creuse*, he says; and then: *le ronflement du tour ne discontinuait pas, comme une voix furieuse qui l'appelait*—"the whirring of the lathe never stopped, like a voice of fury calling her." The humming vertigo that draws the street towards her is rendered audible to us by the correlative sound of the lathe.

That is all, or nearly all, there is to it; but I think it is enough to set up our image, our *exemplum*. I leave to you, as I constantly reserve for myself, the inexhaustible pleasure of tracing out the infinite strands of interconnection in this and other novels, complexities as deep as life itself but ordered, fixed, and dramatized into arrested action. If I have made too much of Flaubert, or too much of too little of Flaubert, I can only say that I have not wilfully ignored men as great, or greater. It is proper to honor France, and to honor the *trouvère*, the discoverer; for it has been through Flaubert that the novel has at last caught up with poetry.

by Dorothy Van Ghent

THE PASSION OF THE GROVES

JOSEPH Warren Beach speaks of Keats's poetry as representing a "relatively simple type of nature-love," and of his praise of birds, brooks and flowers as "nature-poetry in its humblest form."¹ Since poetry of the green covert—that topographical form which dominates the greater number of Keats's poems—is a long tradition complex with emotional associations, and since Keats's use of that setting is as traditional as it is personal, a fairly common apprehension of the simple sensuousness of his treatment of natural setting would seem to need revision. His friend Brown says that the nightingale of the *Ode to a Nightingale* sang one morning in the spring of 1819 in a glade near Wentworth Place, whereupon Keats wrote a poem²; Keats says that the bird sang long before in an emperor's gardens and in Boaz's field. But it had sung also in fragrant glades again and again in Keats's own earlier poems; it had sung in the fifteenth century in another forest bower for the writer of *The Flower and the Leaf*, a poem upon which Keats wrote a sonnet; and it had continued to sing in leafy coverts down through the centuries. The fixity of this particular association of the glade, not only in the history of Keats's own imaginative patterns, but also in the English tradition which he knew, indicates permanent and fairly profound channels of feeling for which the phrase "a relatively simple type of nature-love" is unsuitable.

The following pages attempt to reconstruct so much of the pattern of association symbolized by the green glade as has an obvious relevance to Keats's use of this setting. His marginal

¹Joseph Warren Beach, *The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry* (New York, 1936), p. 32.

²Amy Lowell, *John Keats* (Boston, 1925), Vol. II, p. 248-249.

pencilings and underscorings in books offer a consistent indicator of the imaginative appeal held for him by the shady covert in the grove. The green glade is a constant locus of sublime feelings in the eighteenth century poetry which helped to form his taste. The traditional associations of glade and bower and arbor are specific; they are specific also in his own poetry from early to late. Their enumeration aids in the understanding of so complex and so personal a piece of writing as the *Ode to a Nightingale*.

Halting through a borrowed copy of *Palmerin of England*, a sixteenth century romance translated from the Portuguese by Anthony Munday and newly edited and corrected by Robert Southey, Keats's pencil stopped first³ to score the passage where Don Duardos leads his pregnant wife, Florida, into the forest "for that he supposed the sight of the spreading trees, and pleasant passages through the grassy groves, would be the occasion of the unminging of her former fits." The pencil halted again at a tower in the Valley of Perdition, "surrounded with tall poplars, which rose so thickly from the bed of the river, that they well nigh hid the tower from any who should look through them." Pausing only at a moral thought in some forty pages, it retrieved a fine-sounding word from a valley in Lacedemonia where "the thickness of the trees made his passage more tenebrous than else it would have been." In this romance, valleys "full of thick trees," "trees dark and gloomy, the air damp and overshadowed," "high trees round about, which made it very obscure . . . and the trees were dark and mournful," are provided irresistibly for every hero who sets out from Constantinople. Keats's pencil misses none of them. Dangers infest the valleys; combats with melancholic knights lead to gracious but shadowed entertainment by ladies devoted to their mourning; the forest contains galleried apartmented ruins where Death is sculptured, pavilions come upon by dark where lie dead knights on marble biers.

³The markings are reproduced by Amy Lowell in Appendix C of the second volume of her biography of Keats. Southey's edition of *Palmerin* was published in 1817.

The dead, handsome in armor, lying like enchantment in a green Avalon; mysterious, possibly dangerous explorings released by a dark and allied inwardness, are mediaeval associations of the grove never quite lost to imagination. Tidied up in the artifice of the garden, the privy arbor transformed the actual dangers of the forest—dangers of combat and of losing oneself quite—into amorous suggestion, with its margin of incertitude and precariousness; as in the *Romance of the Rose*, where the arbor at once invites the lover and tries him with hecklers. It promised secrecy also; hence the fairest rose grew there, and maidens walked, as in the *Knight's Tale* and the *Kingis Quair*. Such an arbor is described in *The Flower and the Leaf*, a poem which Keats likened to a "little copse" where he would be "content to lie meekly upon the grass."¹ There is a bench of freshly turned turfs and a hedge all about:

And shapen was this herber, roof and al,
As [is] a prety parlour, and also
The hegge as thik as [is] a castle-wal,
That, who that list without to stond or go,
Though he wold al-day pryen to and fro,
He shold not see if there were any wight within or no.*

And in the fifteenth century poem *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy* the invitation of the arbor is again one of secrecy:

The leves were so thik, withouten fayle,
That thorough-out might no man me espy.*

Certainly also, the arbor in the garden offers health, a purer air and refreshed blood. Wolsey walks in his arbors and alleys at Hampton Court, "the pestilent airs with flavours to repulse."² And the sweet sights and smells and the homogeneous shade

¹*The Flower and the Leaf*, 64-70, in *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, ed. Walter W. Skeat (Oxford, 1907).

²Keats's sonnet on *The Flower and the Leaf*.

³*La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*, 187-188, in *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, ed. Skeat.

⁴Cavendish's metrical life of Wolsey, quoted by Amherst, *History of Gardening in England*, p. 83.

sever, for a moment, the will from its connection with worldly atomies. "It was a new comfort of sorrowis escaped," says Skelton.⁹

In Spenser, the forest, always practically dangerous, holds nevertheless a promise of fair harbour after weary pricking on the plain; and Keats noticed, by underscorings,¹⁰ the "shadie groves," the "loftie trees, yclad with sommers pride," that

spred so broad, that heavens light did hide,
Not perceable with power of any starre:
And all within were pathes and alleies wide,
With footing worne, and leading inward farre:
Faire harbour that them seemes; so in they entred arre.¹⁰

The narrow winding of paths leading to a covert, characteristic of Tudor garden designs¹¹ as, on a grander scale, of the new landscaping of the eighteenth century, and characteristic of Spenser's forests as of those of the later romantic poets, is an elaboration of the pattern of concealment. The Redcross knight and Una wait out the storm in their shelter, and then,

When weeting to returne, whence they did stray,
They cannot finde that path, which first was showne,
But wander too and fro, in ways unknowne,
Furthest from end then, when they neerest weene,
That makes them doubt, their wits be not their owne:
So many pathes, so many turnings seene,
That which of them to take, in diverse doubt they been.¹²

Following the labyrinth, they end in even deeper recess, a hollow cave, amid the thickest woods.¹³

But peace and safety are an illusion of the "coole shade." Where two trees spread a calm shadow, attracting from afar the knight who suffers from the heat of the sun, it is unlucky ground,

⁹Skelton, *The Garland of Laurel*.

¹⁰The passages marked by Keats in the *Faerie Queene* are reproduced in Amy Lowell's *John Keats* (op. cit.), II Appendix C.

¹¹*The Faerie Queen*, I.I.7.

¹²Amherst, *History of Gardening in England*, p. 83.

¹³*The Faerie Queene*, I.I.10.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, I.I.11.

avoided by the shepherd.¹⁴ A Pagan proud, or a false Pilgrim, lies waiting in the "secret shadow" by a fountain side.¹⁵ The adventure of the glade is often erotic: the Redcross knight, "poured out in lossenesse on the grassy grownd"—a line which Keats gave three marginal strokes as well as the usual underscoring—has his courage "crudled" by Duessa's amorous entertainment;¹⁶ and it is in "secret shade" that Acrasia lulls her lovers to sleep, while their manly powers disintegrate. In her bower, the trees themselves have "clasping armes" and "wanton wreathings intricate," an "embracing" vine arches over the porch, and the leaves "enfold" the fruits,¹⁷ these green embracings emblematic of suspension in an ineffable life of the senses.

The under-earth also has a garden, whose entrance is come upon in the "secret shade" of a glade, where sits an uncivil wight to act as guide. It is goodly garnished

With hearbs and fruits, whose kinds mote not be red:
Not such, as earth out of her fruitful wombe
Throwes forth to men, sweet and well savoured,
But dierfull deadly blacke both leafe and bloom,
Fit to adorne the dead, and decke the drery toombe.¹⁸

In Proserpina's garden is a thick arbor, useful, like those in Tudor gardens, as protection from the heat. Here Mammon inquires insidiously of the fearful Guyon,

Why takest not of that same fruit of gold,
Ne sittest downe on that same silver stoole,
To rest thy wearie person, in the shadow coole.¹⁹

The covert pattern is thus intricately composed of associations of the forest's actual dangers; the healthfulness and comfort offered by grove or arbor; the natural invitation of secrecy: amorous suggestion—with its coloration of immortality, possibly

¹⁴*Ibid.*, I.II.28.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, I.VI.48.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, I.VII.6-7.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, II.XII.53-55.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, II.VII.51.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, II.VII.63.

inherited from primitive fears of what the forest held; and an illusion of absolute peace. As for the latter, the images of such peace are those of death, wisely presented thus by Spenser, and without allegory—as dead knights laid out beautifully in forests—by the romances. Even the association of death with the green and utter peace of a forest bower is a complication of the real danger of losing oneself, and of the attraction of doing so; just as the amorous enticements of the bower complicate danger with pleasure, until all ends in going to sleep, a dissolution at once threatening selfhood and pleasant as promising an unselfing.

However, even in Spenser, the sweet recesses of the forest hold holy apparitions of high thought and lofty entertainment, spells as binding to that ground as any false enchanter's. There Una teaches the savage nation to adore. In eighteenth century poetry, where the grove lost much of its detail by immersion in the Platonic essence, awesome messengers of a better life were its almost constant frequenters. Whether or not these too were specious enchanters, like Archimago in the secret shade, is an inquiry into taste.

Mr. Pope, for instance, places an urn in the grove on Tinian Lawn at Hagley, and a motto upon it, and the result—a combination of urn, motto, and Mr. Pope's touch—is to fix "that thoughtfulness and composure, to which the mind is insensibly led by the rest of this elegant scene."²⁰ Whately, in his *Observations on Gardening*, expresses the practical desideratum of protection from high noon, and, acknowledging that the thrill of coolness is often a merely imagined one, suggests that it may be emotionally complex:

Groves, even at a distance, suggest the ideas which they realize upon the spot, and by multiplying the appearances, improve the sensations of relief from the extremity of the weather; Grottos, Caves and Cells, are on the same account agreeable circumstances in a sequestered recess: and though

²⁰Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (Edinburgh, 1825), I, 48-49.

the chill within be hardly ever tolerable, the eye catches only an idea of coolness from the sight of them.²¹

Like Nature, the new landscapists abhorred a straight line; with Kent, one of the leaders of the movement, sinuosity was a ruling principle.²² Getting lost was made delightful by the perfect safety of the circumstances, and the "secret shade" suggested terrors that gave the ladies an opportunity to faint. Lord Percival writes to his brother-in-law of a stolen visit to Hall Barn, Mr. Waller's house:

The wood consists of tall beech trees and thick underwood, at least thirty feet high. The narrow winding walks and paths cut in it are innumerable. . . . In one part of the wood, and in a deep bottom, is a place to which one descends with horror, for it seems the residence of some draggon. . . . This place may be call'd the Temple of Pan or Sylvanus, consisting of several apartments, arches, corridors, etc., composed of high thriving ewes cut very artfully.²³

Lady Percival had to be supported.

In that romantic poetry of the eighteenth century which helped to form Keats's taste,²⁴ the forested recess often acts as the complete artistic matrix, which is to say that whole poems derive their meaning from the associations of the glade. Its peace, its serenity alone move one of Beattie's pensive youths to incantation:

O wilt thou to thy favourite grove
Thine ardent votary bring,
And bless his hours, and bid them move
Serene, on silent wing!

* * * * *

Thy shades, thy silence, now be mine,
Thy charms my only theme;
My haunt, the hollow cliff, whose pine
Waves o'er the gloomy stream,

²¹Quoted by Alison, II, 44.

²²Amherst, *op. cit.*, 264.

²³*Ibid.*, 241-242.

²⁴Sidney Colvin, *Keats*, in *English Men of Letters* series (New York, n.d.), 20-21.

Where the scar'd owl on pinions grey
 Breaks through the rustling boughs,
 And down the lone vale sails away
 To more profound repose.²⁶

More subtle is the echo of these last lines at the end of Keats's *Nightingale*, where the plaintive anthem of the bird fades over the still stream, "and now 'tis buried deep in the next valley-glades;" but the dynamism of want is the same, of desire for that repose "more profound" which the deeper glade offers and which the deepest glade, the grave, affords. Beattie's minstrel's apprentice, significantly a white-haired boy with tender ears, is habituated from childhood to more and more remote retreats in the wilderness, and receives the climax to his education in a still wilder vale, a "deep retir'd abode," a "savage dell,"²⁷ where he learns from an apparition of ancient wisdom to flee the world, to turn his head from the gay dancers as well as from the false coiners. In the old harpist of *The Minstrel*, the loftier associations of the glade in the grove are incarnated: he teaches renunciation of the plural experiences the sun shines upon, and he teaches God's blessing of homogeneity of feeling, whose image is the green shade.

Akenside sees Minos and Numa forsaking their Elysian seats and "down the embowering glade move to your pausing eye."²⁸ Collins imagines Milton, when he seized the trump with which to play his native strain, lying "the fancied glades among."²⁹ Thomson must "haste to the mid wood-shade" in order to sing of the circling year,³⁰ and there, in scenes "where ancient bards the inspiring breath ecstatic felt; and, from the world retired, conversed with angels and immortal forms," is roused to a sacred terror by the apparition of similar forms.³⁰ One of the figures speaks to him:

²⁶Beattie, *Retirement*.

²⁷Beattie, *The Minstrel*, II, vi, vii.

²⁸Akenside, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, III, 289-292.

²⁹Collins, *On the Poetical Character*.

³⁰Thomson, *Summer*, 9-14.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 522-563.

'Once some of us, like thee, through stormy life,
Toiled, tempest-beaten, ere we could attain
This holy calm, this harmony of mind,
Where purity and peace immingle charms.
Then fear not us; but with responsive song,
Amid these dim recesses, undisturbed. . . .
Of nature sing with us.'

Their voices are heard chanting from "the deepening dale, or
inmost sylvan glade:"

'A privilege bestowed by us, alone,
On contemplation, or the hallowed ear
Of poet. . . .'

Majestic as these are the predecessors of Keats's nightingale, messenger of immortality, elusive entreator of the forest dim, whose song, poured forth as a soul is poured forth, invites to death.

For the appearance of the green glade in Keats's poetry it is always possible to find both general and exact correspondences in his own experience whether in body or in book. The tendency is to consider such correspondences as cause and result, despite the extensiveness of the recess motif in literature and the commonness in experience of the pleasure of the green covert. His own childhood was spent in a bosky countryside, described thus by Colvin:

Across the levels of the Lea valley . . . rose the softly shagged undulations of Epping forest, a region which no amount of Cockney frequentation or prosaic vicinity can ever quite strip of its primitive romance. Westward over Hornsey to the Highgate and Hampshire heights, northwestward through Southgate towards the Barnets, and thence in a sweep by the remains of Enfield Chace, was a rich tract of typically English country, a country of winding elm-shadowed lanes, of bosky hedge and thicket and undulating pasture and cornland charmingly diversified with parks and pleasancess.²¹

When he was beginning *Endymion* on the Isle of Wight, he wrote that he was in a "most beautiful place" where he had found

²¹Quoted by Lowell (*op. cit.*), I, 36.

"several delightful wood-alleys, and copses, and quick freshes."²² The description of Mount Latmos in that poem is, says Amy Lowell, "the Isle of Wight made grander and bolder."²³ Again, the scene of *Endymion* is not the clefts and alley of Shanklin, but the topography of Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe* and his *Man in the Moone*, from which Keats is said to have borrowed the Latmian forest, the precincts of Pan, and the "bushie Lawrell's pleasing shade" where Endymion is lulled to rest.²⁴ But Shakespeare was to him almost a second nature, and he had on his tongue like his own language the idiom of green seclusion of the *Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*. He knew also the deep woods of Comus. If there is, then, causal responsibility for covert-topography in Keats, it is the combined responsibility of outer scene, of books, and of his own choice-making psyche. For there are many natural configurations to choose among as images of place, and even the configuration of the green covert offers a various detail for the orientation of imagination. The vale of the Solitary in the *Excursion*, for instance, is most completely removed from world's annoy:

A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high
 Among the mountains; even as if the spot
 Had been from eldest Time by wish of theirs
 So placed, to be shut out from all the world!
 Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn. . . .²⁵

And yet the Wanderer and the poet, invading it, are greeted first by a band of peasants performing a social act, carrying their dead in funeral procession;²⁶ and the Solitary's own call is a scene of lively hospitality and discussion.²⁷ The vale among the mountains where stands the Pastor's church is also an embracing and containing place, shaded with trees and peaceful, but it is to the

²²The *Letters of John Keats*, ed. M. B. Forman (Oxford, 1935), 19-20.

²³Lowell, *op. cit.*, I, 343.

²⁴*Ibid.*, I, 323-333.

²⁵*Excursion*, II, 328-332.

²⁶*Ibid.*, II, 385-392.

²⁷*Ibid.*, II, 654f.

chimneys and smoke of humble dwellings that the eye is dirted, and to the lives of the congregation that the imagination appeals.³⁸ Leigh Hunt exercised strong influence upon Keats's early vocabulary, particularly upon those words—like nest and glen—which name places of retreat, but when Hunt presents the pleasures of rural life, his images, too, are social; his woods “let mansions through;” his vales are “cottaged;”³⁹ his grass “lie-down-uponable” stretches eventually to dinner.⁴⁰ Oceans, rivers, ruins, tempests, mountains are to Byron a feeling, as well as the forest. Through Shelley's deep glens and caves, water rushes with volcanic power, and the final effect of the imagery is of scattering and conveyance rather than of localization; streams, pools, and the sea, in their mysterious resources, act as emblems both of the mind and of eternity; his baptizings are by water, his peace by immersion. The dominant configurations in Keats, on the other hand, are wholly interiors, and the retirement is that of the soul “gathered into herself,” as Socrates said of the true disciple of philosophy and student of death.⁴¹

As motto for his first book, he used a line from Hunt's *Story of Rimini*, “Places of nestling green for poets made.” The motto may act as a reminder that, in eighteenth century romantic poetry, the poet, with the philosopher, was privileged to hold intercourse, in the green glade, with other-world spirits; or at least with incarnations of wisdom: a possible sublimation of the other-worldly encounters of Thomas Rymer and Sir Orfeo.

‘A privilege bestowed by us, alone,
On contemplation, or the hallowed ear
Of poet,’

is the farewell word of those majestic forms who roused Thomson to a sacred terror. Writing to George Felton Mathew of the fact that the Muse declines to walk the hospitals with him in London, Keats says,

³⁸*Ibid.*, V, 77f.

³⁹Hunt's sonnet *Description of Hampstead*.

⁴⁰Hunt, *A Rustic Walk and Dinner*.

⁴¹Cf. *Alastor*, 502-514.

⁴²*Phaedo*.

Should e'er the fine-eye'd maid to me be kind,
 Ah! surely it must be whene'er I find
 Some flowery spot, sequester'd, wild, romantic. . . .
 Where on one side are covert branches hung,
 'Mong which the nightingales have always sung
 In leafy quiet: where to pry, aloof,
 Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof,
 Would be to find where violet beds were nestling. . . .⁴³

And in *I Stood Tip-toe upon a Little Hill*, although the attendant genius of such a place is not personalized, yet poetic inspiration itself is thought of as belonging naturally to it:

What first inspir'd a bard of old to sing
 Narcissus pining o'er the untainted spring?
 In some delicious ramble, he had found
 A little space, with boughs all woven round. . . .⁴⁴

We have seen him likening the *Flower and the Leaf* to a "little copse." Still following, in *I Stood Tip-toe*, a theory of poetic origins, he helps himself to a rhyme for "glade" in order to fill out the pressing associations of the glade-image:

And when a tale is beautifully staid,
 We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade.⁴⁵

Safety is, in a sense, the most modern amenity of the glade, in its avowment of a need. Traditionally the image had stood certainly as inviting to a kind of safety, from heat or tempest, but safety complicated by illusion and death, by dragon or la belle dame sans merci. Nevertheless, the very formation of an embrasure is a provision of security. Full of traditional qualitative epithet is the following, from *Sleep and Poetry*:

What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing
 In a green island, far from all men's knowing?
 More healthful than the leafiness of dales?
 More secret than a nest of nightingales?⁴⁶

⁴³Epistle to George Felton Mathew, 35-49.

⁴⁴*I Stood Tip-toe upon a Little Hill*, 163-166.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 129-130.

⁴⁶*Sleep and Poetry*, 5-8.

Among those things of beauty which are a joy forever, listed in the opening lines of *Endymion*, is a "mid forest brake, rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms;"¹ and we are told why they are a joy forever—because they keep

A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing."²

But the bower in the forest is not always, of course, without excitement. In *Sleep and Poetry*, among the conditions of perfect bliss, a nymph will entice the poet to "the bosom of a leafy world;" although even here they will "rest in silence," curled up like pearls in the recesses of a shell.³ The detail of these passages, the sequestered flowery covert overhung with branches, the nest of nightingales, the violet beds, the secrecy and tranquility, the healthfulness of the experience, the erotic tension, make up most of the textural elements of the later *Odyssey* *a Nightingale*. An emotional change has, of course, taken place. The associated quietus is that of death rather than sleep. The erotic element has undergone a nervous distortion evident in its intensity. And yet the central, the fifth stanza, in which the poet at last finds his way to the glade where the nightingale is singing, is one of quiet and healthful consummation:

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

The fast fading violets covered up in leaves bring us to a group of fairly minute notations of a covert pattern. The violets are

¹*Endymion*, I, 18-19.

²*Ibid.*, I, 3-5.

³*Sleep and Poetry*, 117-121.

covered by leaves as is the poet who listens to the nightingale's song. In *I Stood Tip-toe*, Keats lists among beautiful things a bush of May flowers:

And let long grass grow round the roots to keep them
Moist, cool and green; and shade the violets,
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.⁵⁰

In the Latmian forest of *Endymion*, the moist earth feeds the "weed-hidden roots."⁵¹ In the *Ode to Psyche*, the two creatures of myth lie on the bedded grass "mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers," the detail of the roots of the flowers repeating the principal lyric incident, as do the violets of the *Ode to a Nightingale*. In one of the fairy songs, young buds "sleep in the root's white core."⁵² In the peroration of *Endymion*, Keats says that he hopes to write many a line before the daisies "hide in deep herbage."⁵³ When Endymion discloses his heart to Peona in her bower, he speculates on the blessings of love, whose emblem is the nightingale "cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves."⁵⁴ Even the nested wren "beneath a sheltering ivy leaf and the poor patient oyster have their tranquil arbors."⁵⁵ Such notations might be called the ornament of the retreat pattern. Hush and coolness, shade and hiding, tranquility and sleep, and a safe binding; even the moisture of the vernal cell, to one with "burning forehead and a parching tongue," schooled by disease in the qualities of soils and airs,⁵⁶ are inviting.

Shelley's *Alastor* and Keats's *Endymion*, fairly frequently showing verbal parallels, form an instructive comparison as to the use of setting for similar narrative events. Shelley's poem, the earlier by three years, is a tale of the life-long pursuit of a vision of love; Alastor is driven mad, as a social creature, by his dream of a goddess-like form, and he spends his life seeking a reincarnation

⁵⁰*I Stood Tip-toe*, 32-34.

⁵¹*Endymion*, I, 64-65.

⁵²*Fairy Songs* I.

⁵³*Endymion*, I, 50-51.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, I, 828-829.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, III, 63-68.

⁵⁶Cf. his letter to Taylor, p. 379-380 of the *Letters* (op. cit.)

of the vision, by rushing river, by pool and forest and chasm. The same narrative dynamism obtains in Keats's poem; Endymion, fallen in love with a beautiful visionary face, is automatically borne by his longing through caverns of earth and sea and air, until the goddess is restored to him. In both poems, forest covert and cave are the constant setting through which the hero moves. Yet the uses of place are quite distinct. Through Shelley's forest and chasms a stream of water rushes ever, bearing Alastor with it, and even its stillest pools are mirrors of the elusive vision, from which Alastor turns restlessly toward movement again;⁸⁷ so that the effect is of a constant journey through the setting rather than a resting in it. The opposite effect, that of stoppings, of localities, of finite goals and endings, of places to be in rather than to go out of, obtains in *Endymion*.

Through the whole of the first book, the setting is the Latmian forest. There is movement of the slightest, a procession, a dance, mere ornament of foreground under the deep shade of the grove, like a Poussin "landscape with figures." And when the figures remove from one place to another, or describe other places either in hymn or confession, they merely reinterpret the same static pattern rather than displace it. Immediately following the peroration, the forest of Latmos is described:

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
A mighty forest; for the moist earth fed
So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits,
And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep
Where no man went. . . .⁸⁸

The more gloomy shades are those of the precincts of Pan, sung of in choral procession:

'O thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness. . . .⁸⁹

⁸⁷Cf. *Alastor*, 450-522.

⁸⁸*Endymion*, I, 67-72.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, I, 232-235.

Plunging, in the second canto, into subterranean territory, he comes upon little caves "wreath'd so thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd large honey-combs of green;" and in the "greenest nook"⁸² of all.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, IV, 670-676.

In *Lamia*, vales and glades, dusky brakes and mossy green form the early setting, and even in Corinth the banquet-hall of Lamia's palace is decorated with "fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade."⁹⁶ Moreover, the glade serves as an important structural contrast with the "purple-lined palace of sweet sin"⁹⁷ to which Lamia and Lycias retire. In the introductory episode of the poem, Hermes and his nymph go into the forest, the green forest which acts preservatively upon love:—

Into the green-recessed woods they flew;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do. . . .⁹⁸

whereas, in the fairy palace in Corinth, as soon as the common rout has been allowed to enter, a cold analysis reduces the illusion of love to its primitive ugliness.

The story of the pot of basil may be assumed to represent a native choice of the sensibility even though it was taken from Boccaccio. In this tale, the forest serves a ghoulish function, which becomes even more ghoulish as the covert-pattern is transferred to the pot of basil itself. The wicked brothers resolve "in some forest dim to kill Lorenzo, and there bury him;"⁹⁹ and Isabella, following the directions of the revenant, finds his grave under the "dark pine roof in the forest" in a "sudden turfed dell."¹⁰⁰ Taking the mouldering head with her, she plants it in a pot of basil, a morbid duplicate of other dark and earthy, plant-nourishing places.

The *Ode to a Nightingale* is a richer, more mature and involved statement of the covert pattern. The poem employs most of the resources of feeling which had been reflected, as of common experience, in traditional expression of this particular gestalt. The plural, exposed world without is one of pain and confusion and that empirically known death that attends fever, palsy, and spectre-thin youths. Keats's enumeration of the miseries of sun-

⁹⁶*Lamia*, II, 125.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, II, 31.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, I, 144-145.

⁹⁹*Isabella*, xxii.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, xxxvii.

stricken humanity in the third stanza of the ode has its many counterparts in the poetry of retreat. "Thrice happy he," says Thomson,

who, on the sunless side
Of a romantic mountain, forest-crowned,
Beneath the whole collected shade reclines;
Or in the gelid caverns, woodbine-wrought,
and fresh bedewed with ever-spouting streams,
Sits coolly calm; while all the world without,
Unsatisfied and sick, tosses in noon.
Emblem instructive of the virtuous man,
Who keeps his tempered mind serene and pure,
And every passion aptly harmonized,
Amid a jarring world with vice inflamed."⁷¹

Cowper asks for a lodge in the wilderness, "some boundless contiguity of shade,"

Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more."⁷²

And of the Solitary's recess in the *Excursion*, Wordsworth says,

peace is here
Or nowhere; days unruffled by the gale
Of public news or private; years that pass
Forgetfully; uncalled upon to pay
The common penalties of mortal life,
Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain."⁷³

The shade, isolation, and security are themselves conducive to harmony of feeling, but there is an endeavor, throughout this convention of setting, to dramatize the emotions to which the setting gives rise. Like the allegorical apparitions of the grove in eighteenth century poetry, Keats's nightingale bears a concentrated burden of aroused idealism, and acts as "emblem instructive" of the harmonization of passion, of a serene and hap-

⁷¹Thomson, *Summer*, 458-468.

⁷²Cowper, *The Task*, II, 1-5.

⁷³Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II, 364-369.

py state of being uninfected by knowledge of sickness and death. The immortality attributed to the nightingale is its myth of harmonized impulses. And the poet's conceit of easeful death is his own myth.

Again, like the forests of eighteenth century romantic poetry, which are the matrix of a new emotional dispensation, Keats's forest is that of summer; the green acts like alcohol to protect the formal structure within it. What is under green keeps, like the immortal love of Hermes and his nymph. It is true that the ode involves, like the narrative *Lamia*, a disintegration of satisfactions; the ego of the poem returns to a recognition of the separateness of object of desire and subject of desire, forcibly and forlornly as Lycias is made to recognize the lamia in its brute guise. But as in *Lamia* the Hermes episode is a unit separable from the Corinth episode, so in the *Ode to a Nightingale* the ideal dispensation is eventually disengaged from the ego of the poem, and the poet is left to his own empirical recognitions of loss and doom. The structure of satisfactions achieved—as in the fifth stanza—is bound up with the concept of immortality and is allowed to fly away with the bird, to be buried deep in the next valley glade.

The ode uses all of the ornament which had, so far through Keats's writing, been associated with the green glade. The "winding way" through which the light of the moon glances are convolutions persistent in his enclosure-designs, as they are persistent also in the place-patterns of his English forebears. The "fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves" repeat, in minor notation, the principal lyric incident. Like the poet and the nightingale, the violets are under a safe preservative leaf-covering; while their fading echoes both the initial wish to "fade far way, dissolve and quite forget," and the note of mortality at the end. The motif of burial is constant. The draught of vintage which should transport the poet to the ecstasy of the forest dell has been "cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth." The darkness is "embalmed;" and though the word refers to the fragrances of the forest, embalming ointments are used to preserve the dead, and Keats had read the pages of Diodorus Siculus which meticu-

lously describe the Egyptian embalming procedure.⁴ Finally the song of the nightingale is "buried deep in the next valley-glades," the poem ending with another burial which reproduces the glade-burial that is the subject-matter of the poem itself.

Let us follow the sequence of incident. A nightingale is singing "in some melodious plot of beechen green, and shadows numberless," and the poet expresses a desire to be with it "in the forest dim." Distressed both by the rapture of the song and by his own insidious rationality, he is reminded of all the disagreeable things which the nightingale—"thou among the leaves"—has never known. First wine and then poetry offer antidotes to that unpleasant consciousness. He achieves his wish and is in the forest glades where the bird sings. It is night ("tender is the night"); no light penetrates "save what from heaven is with the breezes blown through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways." The gratefulness of the dark is reiterated in "I cannot see what flowers are at my feet," and the poem continues, through the fifth stanza, with enumeration of the lovely detail of the forest. It is in this stanza that the experience of the glade is consummatory and actual harmonization attained, even though no feeling is stated and only sense impressions are presented—darkness, fragrance, various herbage and flowers. But the stanza is one of arrival, centered between an ecstatic journey hither and an elegiac departure.

The eighteenth century romantics, overcome with the eupesopia of total immersion in essence, were, in general, too busy with their feeling of release to notice very clearly where they were, so long as they were in a picturesque place; whereas to Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare the detail had been dear. Keats's green glade is, like those in eighteenth century poetry, a place of uninhibited release; but it is presented in objective detail, thus recalling to poetry the ancient ornament of herb and flower, even while it acts as personal affective symbol.

After this center has been reached, a fatigued quiescence sets

⁴*The Historical Library of Diodorus the Sicilian*, tr. by G. Booth (London, 1814), 90-91. For Keats's reading of Diodorus, cf. Lowell, I, 89 and 425.

in, which suggests, to the poet, death. But the death-wish of the sixth stanza is concerned with something wholly distinguishable from the spectacles of pain and destruction enumerated previously, before the poet had gone into the glade. That empirical death, objectively apparent to him, he has loathed and escaped from into the forest dim, where the leaves shut it out. The death-wish of the sixth stanza is heavy with irrationality, and death itself is "rich" and "easeful," a surrogate of rapturous fatigue. It is a name for, a myth of, what the poet is now feeling. The nightingale is still singing, and coincidentally with the death-wish its song seems to be poured forth as a soul is poured forth. But with the beginning of the seventh stanza, a rational distinction asserts itself, a tentative signal of growing self-consciousness. The nightingale is different from the poet; it was not born for death. It has sung not only in this glade, but also in an emperor's gardens, in Boaz's field, and in a grove near a perilous sea. Despite the explicit distinction, however, between mortal poet and immortal bird, the death-myth and the immortality-myth are still but two ways of saying one thing: both nightingale's immortality and poet's death are forms of perdurance in ineffable sense-life, timeless experiences in a grove. There is difference between them only in the growing consciousness that the name of death arouses, for the word has two meanings. The slow and late arousal of the second meaning—which the poem had earlier taken cognizance of—disturbs the identification of death and immortality. The nightingale now usurps the whole idealism of the poem, leaving the poet, like Ruth, "sick for home." In the eighth stanza, a full revolution of consciousness has set in. The poet's sense of the real is rehabilitated; the nightingale's song fades past the near meadow, over the still stream, up the hill-side, "and now 'tis buried deep in the next valley-glades." The deathless object has become completely disengaged from the forlorn, mortal, and rational subject. Because it is deathless, it must be re-buried; for only under the lush covering of the grave-like glade can the structure of satisfactions—the full-throated nightingale singing of summer, and the coming musk-rose full of dewy wine—be perfectly preserved.

by Edwin Berry Burgum

THE NEOCLASSICAL PERIOD IN ENGLISH LITERATURE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFINITION

NEOCLASSICISM, as I am using the term, describes the dominant European culture of the century whose middle point is the year 1700. I am interested in it because of the suspicious ease with which it was defined by its adherents and with which this definition has been accepted by later generations. Such an acceptance, it seems to me, presumes a pragmatism in literary method which means not merely understanding, but taking over any culture's appraisal of itself. This method makes the coherent history of culture impossible. It leaves literary history a series of "appreciations" which are essentially unrelated, though often a semblance of relationship is set up by recourse to ambiguous generalization. Since modern scholarship has generally assumed this attitude, a critical reevaluation of past literature becomes desirable. Neoclassical literature lacks the complexity of that of many other periods. But this perhaps enables the critic to show that no literary expression is really simple, at the same time that its comparative simplicity makes easier the application of a literary method to the discovery of neglected values.

I posit, to begin with, that there are certain striking differences between neoclassicism in France and in England. They have been overlooked because neoclassical theory could not admit of their existence. Neoclassical esthetic, bending to the demand of common sense, recognized that every literary work must differ from every other in superficial details; but it could not admit the presence of important differences, since to do so would negate its validity as a universal esthetic system. If such distinctions

cannot be explained by neoclassical rules, neither can they be profitably discussed in terms of two separate national literary traditions. The attempt of Dryden to use this method, specifically in his vacillation between the use of rimed and blank verse for stage plays, is testimony I accept as proof of the existence of the differences rather than as a satisfactory statement of their nature. Actually a "tradition" is that much of the past which is found capable of assimilation by the present. And one way of finding out what is assimilated is to look for what has been rejected. We may therefore take for granted the similarities between English and French neoclassicism. What we require for a fuller understanding is a clearer notion of the differences. These may best be recognized by a contrast, in Milton's language, between a literature of seriousness and one of frivolity; or, as I prefer to phrase it, between a literature that expresses a sense of security and one conditioned by hidden anxieties.

Perhaps, if we follow Milton closely, all neoclassicism may seem to lack seriousness; for seriousness is only the emotional tone of an art that reflects the main stream of social consciousness. But one may be secure, at least for the time being, without being "serious." A courtier of Louis XIV may have all the better organization of personality precisely because so little needs to be organized. Life may ultimately bring him to his senses and demoralize him completely, but for the time being he may be more complacent than the man who is aware of the probability of demoralization. This fallacious consciousness of being serious I define as complacency, and I take it to be the note of neoclassicism in France. Whereas neoclassicism in England, which Milton would probably have considered a literature of frivolity, I prefer to call the expression through frivolity of concealed anxieties. This psychological explanation of the difference seems to me inescapably sociological in origin. French neoclassicism was unaware of the Revolution to come. But English neoclassicism could not rid itself of the memory of the Civil War that had been lived through and which had changed the entire character of all traditional relationships in England.

Those who share cognate limitations may object to this definition of French neoclassicism, as marked by a combination of apparent seriousness and actual security which may be called complacency. Persons who prefer Shakespeare and Milton and Rabelais to Racine will accept it. But both may agree as to the absence of the note of anxiety. Corneille and Racine wrote tragedies in the classical manner which the French with cool egotism accepted as examples of the grand style, not essentially dissimilar to the profundity of the Greek drama. The historical romance of Mme. de Scudéry with considerable gravity and no lack of verbosity enshrined the moral and courtly values that were deemed those of the ancient, as well as the Christian, world. From the point of view of Milton's esthetic, probably the single work which really approached high seriousness was the *Princesse de Clèves*, of which we may say that it presented a greater depth of emotion than was common at the time. In general, passion itself became a sentiment, and "good sense" was taken for wisdom. We may agree with the age in recognizing its typical figure in its arbiter of criticism, Boileau, revered at home and abroad as a contemporary Horace, whose genius did away with the arduousness of reading Aristotle and finding out what he actually said.

In England, on the contrary, though seriousness was similarly extolled in literary theory, and the complacency of French literature taken, in the French fashion, as illustrative of it, neither seriousness nor complacency were qualities the dominant literature could normally attain. Dryden made a last stand for seriousness and came nearer to it in his *All for Love* than anybody save Milton. But after Dryden, the writing of tragedy (which by its nature cannot be totally bereft of the quality) became virtually impossible. It could not even be distorted into melodrama, but only softened into tragi-comedy.

Comedy prevailed, in the aristocratic circles of which we are speaking, and (in contrast to Molière's satire of the bourgeoisie) satirized the practice of neoclassicism itself. Nor is the note of the contemporary comedy robust, as in Plautus or Ben Jonson.

Not restrained by the necessities of verse, but written in prose that permits a more careless expression of emotion, the comedy betrays the essential spirit of the English aristocracy. Repartee passes from character to character as though motivated by a hysterical need to take nothing seriously. The superficial activity of the mind in wit by tacit consent substitutes for the expression of emotions too disorderly to be confessed. A universal hypocrisy is justified in the name of decorum, and then laid bare in the name of wit. The ageing lady of quality, with only her maid to observe, and encouraged by gin, patches her complexion and practices the poses through which she hopes to win another lover. The charm of seduction, which is the hypocrisy of love, is the common theme; and jealousy is no more than relief from boredom. Comedy passed this limit of discretion later in the period when only the tact of its flippancy prevented *The Beggars' Opera* from appearing a frank satire of aristocratic decay. But Gay's levity did not entirely conceal his cynical recognition that the habits of aristocrats made them brothers under the skin of thieves, prostitutes, and other social outcasts. Only superficial distinctions of manner separated them. These frivolous lords and ladies are even more carelessly playing with living; and, for all their sophistication, as with spoiled children, their impudence and garrulity conceal a guilty conscience.

In the earlier part of the period, aristocracy had not been thus so thoroughly in retreat. But its aggression then betrayed its dilemma. It could only be aggressive by being bourgeois; when it kept to its ideal of manners (as it generally chose to do) it lost its conviction. Aristocracy, in other words, could be vigorous only when a bourgeois was converted to its principles; and this, of course, chiefly happened when the struggle for dominance between the two classes had not yet been settled. So Rymer's criticism of Shakespeare (though based ideologically on the aristocratic devotion to good manners) reflects the crudity of the bourgeois personality in his own unmannerly attack upon Shakespeare's failure to maintain the proper class distinction. *Hudibras*, likewise, satirizes the Puritan temperament in verse which lacks the

aristocratic sensitiveness for quiet, easy flow. The times were still sufficiently unsettled for Dryden to make his resolute attempt at a positive assertion of neoclassicism. The ingratiating but inconclusive empiricism of his criticism measures his failure; just as in his poetic style, his approach to the serenity of the neoclassical ideal, in proportion to its success, isolated him from his countrymen like the sculptural symbol of a lost cause. If the wit of his comedies is pure neoclassicism, the charm of his literary criticism is due to the tolerance set up by the desire to persuade through a compromise with bourgeois attitudes. Later, when such compromises had worked to the advantage of the middle class and Pope took Dryden's place as arbiter of letters, Dryden's complacency had become impossible. Aristocracy passed to the defensive, and substituted innuendo for direct attack, dogmatism for the quiet voicing of conviction. Much of Pope's disgust for vulgarity, especially in poets who could not attain his grace and polish, was doubtless an indirect attack upon middle class pretension to a place in the sun. He is willing upon occasions to vent a surly and impudent satire upon the serving class. But he spends his conscious effort beating down literary pretenders to his throne with scant regard for the aristocratic dignity and classical restraint that meant so much to Dryden. Only more subtly than Butler and Rymer, he violates the virtues he insists upon in others and is contaminated by the very qualities he disdains in principle.

In more respects than the mere perfection of technique in the heroic couplet, English neoclassicism culminates in Pope. As the age on the side of positive accomplishment reached in him its limit of perfection in the superficial matter of technique of expression, it also reached in him its limit of degeneration in the essential matter of the classical ideal as a way of life. No similar contradiction was to be found in France. Boileau may have written a poor epic, but it was an epic. Pope, who wrote a masterly poem in *The Rape of the Lock*, was only making "mock" of the epic ideal by satirizing the loss of a lock of hair in terms of the more serious offense of rape. This critic-poet was the English counterpart to Boileau, the only English writer of comparable

ascendency in both fields, and he still retains more life and verve (as of the very flesh and blood of the era) than any other writer. In contrast to Dryden, he nestles among his contemporaries of the court as their accepted cultural leader, though he appeared to violate their ideal of rank by being a linen draper's son, their religious prejudices by being a Catholic, their sociability by being a recluse, their ideal of grace by being a hunch-back, and agreed with them only in being also a factionalist when factionalism contradicted their ideal of cultural hegemony. The accepted leader of neoclassicism in England was the opposite to the dignified Boileau, a man who wrote most of the time like a social outcast with an inferiority complex.

Now, it must be granted that, however true these assertions, they are contradicted by certain well-known aspects of Pope's work. But the contradictions are to be chiefly found in work in which the ideational interest dominates and not in those given over to action and emotion. Indeed, in reflecting this split between philosophical theory and the actual practice of living, Pope is once more symbolic of his class and his period. But there is no reason why critics should still refuse to recognize the discrepancy unless they repeat the same fallacy of assuming the rule of reason. However incongruous it may seem, Pope believed that not only the human society but the whole universe illustrated the operation of the rational principle. It would be hard to find a line of poetry more utterly complacent (in the French style) than his famous adage: "Whatever is, is right." But behind the complacency is a persistent contradictory undercurrent of cynicism even in his ideational poems: "Though man's a fool, yet God is wise." And, as if to prove that at least the first half of the statement is Pope's real belief, we are advised later to look for a man's ruling passion if we would understand his motives; which is tantamount to saying that, since men are not governed by their reason, you can get a man down if you are shrewd enough to find his Achilles' heel. One gets ahead not by co-operating, not even by expressing one's constructive talents, but by destroying others. This is neither the classical ideal nor that

of any group capable of "ruling," but it was a revelation of the actual program to which English neoclassicism was reduced by the rise of the middle class.

I am primarily interested, however, in the use of verse as a mechanism to deceive the very intellect that Pope admires, and thereby to promote an ambiguity more difficult to attain in plain prose. It results in part from the nature of poetry itself; from the fact that a poem cannot fail to convey something more than the conscious and rational aspects of the personality. It conveys with varying degrees of success the whole complicated state of the personality. The reason may, as in Pope, intervene, not to aid in the clarification of this state, but to quite the opposite result, in order to distort the true relationship in the reproduction. Yet, willy, nilly, the real state of the personality is there on the page; only, a trained reader is needed to get it. Otherwise, the audience, which shares the same general type of personality, as the majority of Pope's readers probably did, surrenders as completely to the ambiguity as did the poet himself in the act of composition. But a second element intensifies the ambiguity, and that is the purely musical aspect of poetry. For verse may be so written as to hurry us along, to discourage the dwelling upon the meaning of any detail, to distract us by the glitter and sparkle of its self-confident movement. In a similar way the heightened tempo of drawing-room conversation translates the cliché into wit, or the fictitious state of well-being set up by alcohol discourages real attention. It was this sort of atmosphere that the heroic couplet tended to transfer to the printed page. The *Essay on Criticism* may be taken as a second example of the misuse of the possibilities of poetry by the clever journalist in Pope. The apt witticism of its utterance is aimed to discourage the dull fool who likes to take a second thought. There are few poems in English, not even of Byron, in which aphorisms, like the juggler's balls, glitter more brightly in the sun. But the haste of the utterance actually distracts attention from the pedestrian meaning. If we pause to examine the rules laid down,

we shall find no clue which will help us to understand the gracious and urbane charm of its author's own best work.

The *Essay on Criticism* is useless as a guide to *The Rape of the Lock*. And it must be admitted that in this poem Pope seems to rise superior to his age and to those limitations in his own work I have been stressing. But the method by which he achieves this end is worth examination. It is a mock epic still. This brilliant crystalization of his powers does not employ different social attitudes from those I have analyzed in his less admirable poems. Indeed, here more than ever, the charm of the utterance distracts from the basic state of feeling. Only the sense of superiority is here more confident. The poem is an illustration of a real security, however temporary. And the course of that security lies in the relationship of the poet to the protagonists. Psychologically it proceeds from that sense of strength of character a weak man may sometimes get when he sees two adversaries so weakened by their dissensions that he can step in and arbitrate successfully. By satirizing both parties to the dispute as benevolently as only one not involved in it can do, Pope has increased the apparent authority of his personality and coolly broken the spell of heated partisanship with which he was himself on other occasions only too familiar. This psychological process is utilized to establish the tone of virtually every detail in the poem, and reaches its height when, in parody of the *Iliad*, the sounds of this tea-table squabble ascend until they strike the blue vaults—of the ceiling. It is, after all, a process of humiliation. There is nothing heroic about our age, Pope is saying, and do not let your unmannerly excess of temper delude you into thinking so; return to a true sense of values, and recognize the docile and gracious insignificance which is our lot. (How much of a similar psychology lies behind the distracting surface of the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns in the field of literary theory.)

Otherwise, Pope, violating his own advice, remains at home in the factionalism and bickering of his age. He hates the pettiness of others because it is the mirror of his own. He can escape from it, otherwise, only in such poems as the *Epistle to Dr.*

Arbutnot. "Close the door, John." Only behind closed doors, in an atmosphere more reminiscent of the bourgeois family than the hermit's retreat, can friendship reveal itself in the consciousness of mutual escape. Outside, the vituperation reaches its height in those verbal battles of the *Dunciad*, the absurdity of which had been satirized in the *Rape*. Here once more the process is equally simple, though the result is less complacent. It is that of increasing one's stature, giving one's self a fictitious sense of security, by belittling everyone else. The mere fact that Pope actually was the most important poet of his age should not blind us to the psychology of the poem, both as representative of his own state of feeling about himself and of similar states of feeling in his readers who needed to identify themselves with his superior talent in order to deride imaginatively persons weaker than themselves. It was possible thus to keep alive Aristotle's definition of the comic spirit.

I do not intend to imply that either Pope or his reader was completely conscious of this complexity in the esthetic pleasure they were receiving. The smoothness of the expression was a fortunate inheritance of literary method from more lyric generations. But by now the harmony between style and content, which had been the rare accomplishment of Dryden, had disappeared. Style became the smoother, the more rough the content, and was thus useful to conceal the actual violation of the classical principles extolling the dignity and self-control of the superior man. For an instance, Pope, not content with the circumscribed chamber-pot of the later Fielding (any more than he would have been with the later cacophonies of a Churchill or the earlier of a Butler), names "fair Cloacina" as the patron saint of one of his poetic adversaries. After her dowsing ministrations,

Renewed by ordure's sympathetic force,
As oil'd with magic juices for the course,
Vigorous he rises; from th' effluvia strong;
Imbibes new life, and scours and stinks along;

Nor heeds the brown disorders of his face.

A slight loss of smoothness, and Pope would have been turning

out a typical poem by Swift. But from Swift I choose more prudently:

See now comes the captain all dawb'd with gold lace;
O law! the sweet gentleman! look in his face;
And see how he rides like a lord of the land,
With the fine flaming sword that he holds in his hand.

In this rollicking verse, sound and sense, however separately inelegant, combine together, and do not contradict each other'. The verses from Pope, on the contrary, show a propriety of sound in contradiction to their impropriety of statement. The urbanity of the verse as cadence manages to palliate the verbal meanings. The regular iteration of the couplet rime, the light quantitative regularity of syllabic succession, the sensitive control that prevents smoothness from passing into monotony, metaphor used not to enrich meaning but to produce indirect statement, and the protection, finally, of longwindedness: all set up an atmosphere of classical propriety which enables the reader to enjoy the satiric meanings without being entirely conscious of their essential vulgarity.²

¹If Swift's poetry differs in this respect from Pope's, his prose, curiously, is parallel. He is one of the few writers whose prose, in contradiction to the general rule, compresses meaning more successfully than his poetry. Its appearance of direct, economical statement has often been noted. But its emotional appeal of extraordinary ease and regularity, simplicity and judiciousness, is in conflict with and tends to palliate what is sometimes a quite pathological ferocity of actual meaning, as in his advice to the mothers of Ireland.

²Much research has been directed to the use of musical effects to enhance the ideational meanings of poetry. But little has been done in regard the opposite use of the sound structure to which I have been referring. In Joshua White's *Chain Gang* songs, for instance, there are several instances where a musical structure of a tranquillizing and restraining nature (taken over from the religious spirituals) is in almost ominous contradiction to a latent threat of revolt in the words. Wordsworth's statement that meter controls passion is a half truth. In terms of the total esthetic effort, meter never controls, but is only a single esthetic factor related in a particular way to many others, including its own variations. The esthetic pleasure arises from the totality of these relationships, in which the elements (of idea, emotion, etc.) may either form a harmony of simple repetition or a harmony of a more complex nature, when the related elements are contradictory. I take it that the selection from Swift's poetry is of the former type and that from Pope of the latter. Since the elements forming Swift's simple pattern are not in themselves significant, they do not, although harmonious, form a first rate poem. Pope's contradiction between sound effects and ideational meanings is well fused, and forms a better poem. My use of the poem above is, however, not esthetic at all, but sociological. The very superiority of its esthetic quality to most bourgeois writing permits the neoclassicism of the period to maintain the hypocrisy of its standards and its importance.

Neoclassical poetry, therefore, affords a more complex esthetic experience than has been perceived either by those who have enjoyed or have disliked it. They have failed to recognize the turbulence and the anxiety that lay beneath the surface of the neoclassical personality, because the poetry has consciously aimed to distract the attention to the surface. Turbulence and anxiety have been diluted and controlled in the poetic expression by the hypnotic effect of iambic accents rolling on in ever so light and ever so regular a succession. The quantitative lightness of the syllables (in contrast to the weight of a line in Shakespeare or Milton or Donne) induces a mood of casualness or frivolity which bleaches these hidden fears; just as we say the humorist is saddest of all at heart. Neoclassicism in England thus lived in a conscious fantasy of its real complexion. It was the victim of its own rationalization, and managed to exist by relying upon the appearance of things: the appearance of identity with neoclassicism in France; the appearance of its own similar domination over English culture. Its technical facility lent an air of plausibility to the fantasy.

Probably the most important of these fallacious appearances was that set up by the esthetic uniformity of the entire cultural output. In a general sense, the literature of the period was uniformly characterized by smoothness and simplicity. But in reality these qualities proceeded from different causes and promoted different consequences. In the courtly literature they resulted from the intellectual and emotional sterility of the aristocracy, which welcomed the support of French precedent. But similar qualities were also being promoted in other quarters by the growth of interest in science. Scientific research had been hindered by the texture of Elizabethan style, whose elaborate and sometimes Euphuistic metaphors may have revealed much about the human heart, but could not clarify the new and difficult concepts of physics and chemistry. As early as the reign of Charles II, the secretary of the Royal Society had sent a letter to members pleading that they use the most unadorned and stragithforward style in their scientific papers in order to avoid irrelevance and

ambiguity. The demands of business and of religion were similar. Business transactions obviously required the most direct statement possible. Puritanism made the same insistence for more lofty reasons. In his preface to *Grace Abounding* Bunyan wrote:

I could have enlarged much in this my discourse, of my temptation and troubles for sins; as also of the merciful kindness and working of God with my soul. I could also have stepped into a style much higher than this in which I have discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than I have seemed to do, but I dare not. God did not play in convincing of me, the devil did not play in tempting of me, neither did I when I sunk as into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold upon me; wherefore I may not play in my relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was. He that liketh it, let him receive it; and he that does not, let him produce a better. Farewell.

The final reason for the self-deception of the English aristocracy is implied in Bunyan's last sentence. The courtly circle and its poets were left by the bourgeoisie in apparent control of English culture because the middle class, after buying off the aristocracy in the settlement of 1688, was too absorbed in itself to bother otherwise with them, too absorbed in practical matters to be conscious of esthetic. Bunyan's pugnacity conceals an aversion. But what is uppermost is his confident absorption in his own sense of values. He esteems a different sort of simplicity from Pope's, less prone to innuendo, less polished, and much more virile. It proceeds from a well-knit and efficient personality, but above all, from a more profound one, grounded in the objective reality of the social situation, and hence not afraid of the trials it expects to have to face. If wanting in charm and nuance, if not yet as well qualified to express itself in art as in life, it is at all events consistent. It does not waste itself over unimportant issues, and habitually achieves a psychological harmony of expression the courtly could attain only when they were frivolous or sentimental. Bunyan and Defoe are as representative of the middle class as Dryden and Pope of the aristocracy. Beneath the common regard for simplicity, which seemed to unite

both groups in a literary expression of a common sort and to justify the aristocracy in its assumption of cultural dominance, there was this striking contrast in the actual texture of expression. Literary history has few instances as clear as this, of two different cultures, existing side by side; the supposedly dominant actually given its complexity of tone by its unacknowledged sensitiveness to bourgeois influences; and the new bourgeois culture, content to breed within its own narrow but self-imposed and for the time being satisfactory limitations.

This second and subordinate stream of esthetic expression was shot through with Puritanic morality. It was indifferent to manners, too serious for irony or satire, and at home only in the medium of prose. It was in most qualities the opposite to the aristocratic. It rejected the transcendency given to poetry by the classical tradition, and by its partiality predicted that the novel would remain the typical and predominant bourgeois form. Within these general characteristics it had its division of interest between the practical and its conception of the ideal; just as Puritanism itself tended to produce one moral attitude for the Sabbath and another for week-days. In Bunyan's own work this contrast is seen in the allegory of the *Pilgrim's Progress* and such more practical narratives as *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*. Generally speaking, the practical aspect dominated the production of literature (with the striking exception of Milton) until the rise of Methodism and Romanticism, which symbolized the loss by the aristocracy of even its titular authority in cultural concerns and the attainment by the middle class of the power to write poetry.

The plots of Defoe's novels not only show the practical side of Puritan morality but also reveal how different bourgeois mores were from aristocratic. *Moll Flanders* states that it was all but impossible for a girl without friends or money to support herself in London. It abjures the sexual looseness and prostitution which the aristocracy accepted and joked about. But at the same time, a modern reader may remark that, though circumstances may force the unprotected girl into prostitution, it is stealing that

lands her in jail. If this novel expresses a growing consciousness of a new social position of women in its description of the road that leads through ruin to repentance and a decent life, *Robinson Crusoe* gives the easier receipt for man's success. It extolls self-confidence, inventiveness, the dogged vanquishing of obstacles—a set of virtues that no longer had meaning on the aristocratic level. The good English lad of the middle class, if stranded on a desert island, will use his wits, rise gleefully to the challenge, and transform adversity into success by the very methods that were actually making London a center of mercantile prosperity and England a colonial power with countless faithful Fridays. Here is a new conception of the good life (whether one likes it or not), neither classical nor neoclassical. In this prose there is no conscious rejection of neoclassical standards and styles. There is, rather, their complete ignoring as the practice of life created a new style of personality and simplified the diction of the King James' version of the Bible so that it could more adequately represent a new emphasis upon the daily experience and a new demand for factual accuracy.

Such are the differences between the two literatures. But if it has been unfortunate to ignore them, I do not wish to fall into the opposite prejudice of failing to recognize that certain vital forces were making for amalgamation. The ones I have in mind go deeper than the mutual shift in both classes from the metaphysical nature of seventeenth century thought to latitudinarianism and rationalism; a similar process of thinking, essentially deistic, tends to flourish in both groups. But this too is a superficial observation since in literary expression the middle class was more "deistic" than the aristocracy, whose social uselessness inevitably led to an escape from basic realities into the play of fancy. Pope's style, his sylphs, his "China's clay" for a teacup, his "tube" for the prosaic gun should be studied to show that the monosyllabic word and the short sentence may promote verbosity and indirection of statement as readily as polysyllables and a periodic sentence. Again we must go down into the psychological structure of which cerebration is only a part, and which conditions the

cerebration itself. The psychological structure behind the aristocratic literature is a fairly direct consequence of the objective social situation, which demanded a linguistic affirmation of aristocratic withdrawal from practical concerns.

There were, then, deeper forces making for unity. The aristocracy was grudgingly submitting to middle class demands; and, since it did, the middle class was quite willing to appease. The gradualness of change becomes the permanent form of English life owing to the nature of the settlement of 1688. The party system of government, although of bourgeois origin, permitted controlled aristocratic participation; so that factionalism on the surface split across class lines and obscured the actual change of the base of authority. Active basic conflict between the classes had died away; so that the wonder is perhaps that these cultural distinctions I have been emphasizing were as sharp as they really were. They show that it is easier to change the economic base than the nature of cultural patterns. But this change is bound to come later, and in England it demanded the transformation of both groups. In fact there are two literary gauges for its measurement: *Paradise Lost* and the *Spectator* papers.

In taking the fall of man for his theme in *Paradise Lost*, Milton thought he was bringing to the epic form a theme more universal than those in classical epics. It is clear today that his theme as he understood it is, on the contrary, more circumscribed. But what is important for my purpose here is his intention to be "universal." However inevitably it must fail to be fulfilled, the conscious intention of all serious art in the past to be universal should be sympathetically recognized. Although it more often than not produces a certain aroma of hypocrisy or pretension, it proceeds from a desire for tolerance, comprehensiveness, and an adequate perspective. But this aim defeats itself unless the writer can keep it down to earth by the profundity of his insight into the immediate scene. The quest for the "universal" is little more than a misnomer for the desire to escape the sectarian. Dryden made the attempt and failed. But Milton was so circumstanced by his education in conjunction with his class allegiance that he

could succeed. Thus *Paradise Lost* became the literary document that not only illustrated as much comprehensiveness as the new bourgeois-Puritan spirit could accept, but also illustrated it in a form that at one and the same time broadened the limitations of the ordinary Puritan outlook and made the new viewpoint appealing to the aristocracy. It afforded their wounded pride the compensation of adapting elements of the aristocratic tradition and thus made more palatable the bitter pill of reconciliation to loss of power. *Paradise Lost* showed the aristocracy that its dignity, its sense of honor and heroism, which had become utterly debased within aristocratic ranks, were reappearing with a new and valid substance in the work of at least one writer of bourgeois attitudes. Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (like the earlier attempt in Dryden's *All for Love*), from this point of view, by comparison is testimony that the aristocracy could no longer reach its abstract ideals. But at least it must be acknowledged that in this poem Pope was striving for that broad and unifying range of insights which serious literature always seeks to present as its service to the public. The difference between the two poems of Pope and Milton reveals that a valid and profound integration is possible only to the poet whose social orientation is with the future as well as the past; just as the difference between the positive striving for serenity in *All for Love* and the defensive innuendoes of *The Rape of the Lock* gives evidence of how rapidly the past was being transformed by that future which *Paradise Lost* more adequately predicts than, say, the commonplaces of immediate validity in the work of Defoe and most of Bunyan. Perhaps I am only saying that Milton was the only writer of the period who truly caught the classical spirit in place of mere neoclassicism, and adapted it to the new society, translated its general aims into a vital present (and future) reality that did not begin to lose meaning until the modern period in which we live. At any rate, the fact remains that the acceptance of bourgeois supremacy can be measured in terms of the literary reputation of *Paradise Lost*.

Addison's essays on *Paradise Lost* are more than an important record of this acceptance. They remind us that the literary work

of Addison is the best evidence of the tendency in his period towards social amalgamation under bourgeois hegemony. The cool tone of Addison's style may suggest the aloofness of Dryden, but this solitary instance of aristocratic complacency in the later period proves that the spirit of compromise is in Addison's work on the new basis. Indeed, the existence of the *Spectator* as a magazine is evidence that London itself was an important vehicle of unification. Created by the bourgeois need for a broader mechanism of communication than the drawingroom and a more immediate one than the printed book, the *Spectator* was a force driving the aristocracy into an appreciation of bourgeois mores. The chief symbol of the shift is the change in attitude from that of the older comedy represented in the treatment of the country squire in the Sir Roger de Coverley papers. I take it that the bourgeoisie's fear of the older comedy is measured by its attacking bourgeois traits obliquely through its satire of the country squire. Otherwise I find it difficult to account for the earlier freedom of Shakespeare in the direct satire of both Falstaff and Shallow. Shakespeare is certainly not afraid of the former and he is almost contemptuous of the provincialism of the latter. But in Restoration comedy the country squire is a good-natured blustering extrovert who, when he comes to London, feels free to take his shoes off in the drawing-room and make himself at home there, in complete unawareness of the demoralizing effect of such conduct upon his fashionable London sister. The attempt to satirize him is never quite successful. Not only is he a person of greater independence and strength of character than Shallow, but he enjoys the security of wealth and political authority. Sometimes a fop tries to bate him, but since the squire has too little wit to understand and too little interest to care, the encounter only lays bare the fop's neurotic insignificance. Now, I take it that this was somewhat against the dramatist's intention, and represents his unconscious deference to qualities of the bourgeois personality as symbolized in the country squire.

But in Addison this respect has become fully conscious. Certainly Sir Roger is not the ideal of the man of fashion; but he

comes near being a new ideal of the gentleman, and three quarters of the source of Addison's admiration are his essentially bourgeois traits. Sir Roger is above all sure of himself; he knows that he can buy the specialized knowledge of the law he does not possess. He has the good manners of a good intent since his aim is to do justice and promote the social welfare. His very defects, his hearty common sense criticisms while at the theater, have the saving grace of sincerity and probably were only exaggerations of remarks such as those London merchants made who accepted the theater enough to attend it. But Sir Roger is not at all like the contemporary French picture of *le bourgeois gentilhomme*.

In France, beneath a similarity of aims, the literary fulfillment of the aristocratic ideal was of a quite different texture. Since there was no real pressure from below, and no *Paradise Lost* as its inescapable symbol, there was no necessity for a show of contempt to compensate for a surrender which had not been made. French society was effectively unified for the time being to promote a cultural pattern which had been established in its essential purity as far back as La Pléiade. French cultural history had been the spectacle of its unhindered flowering, and those involved in its triumphant progress could not be expected to foresee its spectacular collapse. The literature of an aristocracy which remained in every respect dominant could be assured and tranquil. The only evidence of the impending storm was of the sort that can only be recognized by later generations: a certain thin bloodless pallor appropriate to the flawless symmetry of features that exist solely to be admired as the *ne plus ultra* of a leisure class. The craving for the simple life, when it appeared, was taken as a new turn in the pursuit of classical simplicity, specifically justified by the pastoral tradition. Marie Antoinette's milking of cows, in contrast to Addison's regard for the country squire, reflects no growing respect for an essentially new way of life, but merely the gentle internal decay of the French aristocracy within its ivory tower. It is only a mirage, too vaporous to be grotesque, of the distant English practicality. It is the final evidence of the French failure ever to catch the actual robustness of the classical

precedent. But the French, having no Milton at their shoulder, were not conscious of the discrepancy; just as they failed to note that Boileau was Aristotle embalmed, out of misguided admiration for the craftsmanship of the mortician.

In England a contrasting situation existed in society. And this difference of social relationships alone, I think, can explain why the English aristocracy, though it sought nothing more than the faithful imitation of its ideal across the Channel, could not reach a comparable complacency. A veritable complacency did not exist at all in England. An unctuous self-satisfaction was a weakness of the middle class, which had become able to give its provincialism a cultural expression with which we may well believe it was too easily satisfied. Here the example of Milton warned of the need for a more generous intention. But it stood at the same time as a warning to the aristocracy that its point of view was already dead. After sporadic assaults upon the new and rather crude literature of the bourgeoisie in the earlier part of the period, the English aristocracy and its literary spokesmen, disturbed by the quality of Milton's poetry, could not altogether ignore its verbal meanings. It averted its face, and became hypnotized by the image of its own insignificance in the work of Pope, as if hoping to appear unworthy of the effort of destruction.

by H. M. McLuhan

POETIC vs. RHETORICAL EXEGESIS
THE CASE FOR LEAVIS AGAINST RICHARDS AND
EMPSON

IT was said ten years ago that American critics once alerted to the new movements in English criticism would probably bog down in the rhetorical exegesis of Richards and Empson rather than adapt it, as F. R. Leavis did, as a means in a critical journey to the full act of plenary critical judgment. At first it may seem simply absurd to say that neither Richards nor Empson is a fully equipped critic. That, however, is not to say for one moment that the critic can dispense with their techniques. The fallacy consists in supposing that the excellent devices for observing and describing "what is going on in a poem" which they have contributed to the art of criticism is a technique of evaluation.

The fact is that neither Richards and Empson nor their disciples have met with success in the evaluation of poems. It is only fair to add that neither Richards nor Empson has ever aimed at evaluation. Those, however, who have employed their method as the method of critical judgment itself have had occasion to be embarrassed. Mr. Kenneth Burke, for example, admits the validity of R. P. Blackmur's observation: "I think on the whole his (Burke's) method could be applied with equal fruitfulness to Shakespeare, Dashiell Hammett, or Marie Corelli." Not only could it be so applied but it is so applied throughout Mr. Burke's very stimulating essays. One can say with equal validity of Mr. Empson that his method is quite as fruitfully applicable to a nursery rhyme or a headline. This is not to damn his method at all. It is merely to say that it doesn't involve literary evaluation.

Within the limits of their method neither Richards nor Empson can say why the nursery rhyme is superior in value as a human product. Involved in the fascinating game of explicating the rhetorical or psychological relations of symbolic statements (and let us recall that Aristotle found it necessary to treat psychology and rhetoric together, just as he presupposes that the poet will first of all have become a rhetorician), Mr. Burke is unable to assign any ground for detecting the pseudo quality of such a writer as E. E. Cummings. Likewise Mr. Empson can delight us with the rhetorical-psychological implications of *Alice in Wonderland* as readily as of Marvell's *Garden*.

Just as Korzybski offers us a correlation of knowledge by an extension of the modes of grammar (and in this respect belongs to an ancient tradition headed by Cratylus and carried on by Pliny, Philo-Judaeus, Origen, St. Bonaventura, and the later alchemists) so Mr. Richards, whose *Meaning of Meaning* is a treatise of speculative grammar of curiously scholastic stamp, offers us a method for interpreting and manipulating our lives by an extension of the devices of rhetoric. In this respect Mr. Richards is a true nominalist son of Ockham, Agricola, and Ramus; and it is no accident that Harvard has welcomed this distinguished schoolman.

Mr. Richards' rediscovery of the functional rhetorical relationships in speech and prose was timely, indeed, after three centuries of Cartesian contempt for metaphor and rhetoric in all its modes. However, in order to understand how Mr. Empson developed Mr. Richards' method it is worth pointing out that all four relations of "sense," "attitude," "tone," and "intention" designated by Richards are not directly applicable to the work of a poet. A speaker or a writer of prose has an intention related to an audience of some sort, but a poet's intention is entirely absorbed in the nature of the thing he is making. The thing made will stand in relation to an audience but this, while important, is only *per accidens*. Thus the "meaning" of a work of prose or rhetoric, whether pantomime, or speech, or tract is incomplete without the precise audience for which it was intended. For example, Swift's

Modest Proposal does not have its whole meaning inherent in the internal relationships of the theme of that piece. One main "ingredient" of the composition is the relation in which its ostensible propositions stand to an audience of peculiar mental complexion. The nature of that audience must be inferred from the piece itself, and it is essential to the understanding of the work.

Thus rhetoric is essentially an affair of external, as well as internal, relations, while a poem has external relations only accidentally. For example, the speech of Marvell's lover to the beloved in *The Coy Mistress* is a work of rhetoric, full of shifting attitudes to the audience and displaying several persuasive arguments. But the audience is in the poem. This is equally true for the poetic drama. A poem or play may contain any number of rhetorical and political components needing exegesis, and yet be wholly poetic—that is, be entirely organized with reference to a dramatic structure or movement which is self-contained. A rhetorical work is for the sake of producing action. A poetic work is an action produced for the sake of contemplation. This is an irreducible functional distinction between rhetoric and poetic which it is the business of the critic to manifest point by point in judging the particular work.

This brings us to the crucial point. Faced with a work full of rhetorical and, therefore, political and psychological complexity, the rhetorician-psychologist can perform prodigies of ingenious and helpful exegesis but cannot possibly, within the limits of his method, determine whether the work is a poem or not. He cannot even decide how much exegesis of technique of imagery is relevant to a particular passage of the work, as the reader of Empson is frequently aware. Mr. Richards and Mr. Empson are thus rhetoricians. Mr. Richards is a rhetorician with one foot in the camp of the speculative or dialectical grammarians and one foot in the camp of the psychologists. Mr. Empson ignores the grammarians and provides a forensic-psychological approach to letters which is naturally congenial to the Southern intellectual. As rhetorician, Mr. Empson has brilliantly availed himself of the new insights of Freud and Jung into traditional speaker-audience

relations. The *Seven Types of Ambiguity* is an ingenious and valid application of Freud's analysis of wit and of dreams to some of the material of poetry. Insofar as political and social myth-making is inevitably part of the material of poetry, as it is of language, it too can be subjected to psychoanalytic scrutiny with fascinating results. But the utmost extension and refinement of the methods for observing speaker-audience relations brings one no nearer the problem of deciding whether a particular work is a poem, and if so, whether it is a significant or an insignificant one.

The whole problem for the critic to determine in poetic judgment has been precisely indicated by Mr. Eliot in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*: "For it is not the 'greatness', the intensity of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts." Richards and Empson offer no clues whatever for approaching evaluation of this sort. Mr. Empson, for example, can offer no clues which would help to determine whether the components of *Alice in Wonderland* are merely an aggregate, whether they are excogitated, or whether they are genuinely fused in a unifying vision which makes of them a dramatic integrity. Similarly, Mr. Kenneth Burke, examining Odets' *Golden Boy*, notes the contrasting cluster-symbols of "violin-prizefight," but he offers no basis for evaluating the pressures and significances which Odets gets or fails to get from the interaction of these components. He offers some shrewd psychological insights into the imagery of *The Ancient Mariner* without indicating whether the work is internally organized, whether it really hangs together at all.

However, in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* Mr. Burke, whom I am here considering as an able rhetorical exegetist in the Empson line, appears for a moment to emerge as a critic of poetry: "We should watch for the dramatic alignment: what is *vs.* what. As per Odets': violin *vs.* prizefight. Or in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*: where we found the discordant principle of parliament . . . placed in dramatic or dialectic opposition to the one voice of Hitler." Here Burke begins with a basic principle of poetic

judgment only to switch, significantly, to a rhetorical example. He recovers himself momentarily later on: "We should watch for 'critical points' within the work, as well as at beginnings and endings. . . . There is such a moment in *Murder in the Cathedral*, where the medium shifts from verse to prose. . . ." Again he selects a rhetorical feature for isolated comment without heeding the dramatic unity, if any.

In a word, the primarily rhetorical exegesis of Richards, Empson, and their very able exponents in America has obscured the essentially poetic exegesis of F. R. Leavis. Leavis doesn't "belong" among the rhetoricians and they have tended to ignore him. However, he has not ignored them, and he can turn out a psychological elucidation of a cluster-symbol as deftly as anyone—as, for example, when he tackles Mr. Empson's "mountains as a totem or father-substitute" in his Wordsworth essay (*Revaluation*, p. 159). The ready hospitality which Leavis accords Richards and Empson as offering preliminary training in poetic exegesis is everywhere evident, and it is explicit in *How to Teach Reading*: "Further education in analysis may be derived from Mr. W. Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*; those who are capable of learning from it are capable of reading it critically, and those who are not capable of learning from it were not intended by Nature for an advanced 'education in letters'. Besides these books there is, at this point, little to recommend." (p. 26).

However much Leavis may welcome Richards and Empson as coadjutors in the matter of training students how to read, he himself derives his method from T. S. Eliot: "Literary study, of course, cannot stop at the analysis of verse—and prose texture. How to go beyond and, without forgetting that everything done by the artist and experienced by the reader is done and experienced here, here, and here at an advancing point in a sequence of words, to deal with all that a critic has to deal with, the student will be able to learn from Mr. T. S. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood* or not at all. It is not only because of their content that the essays in this book are (for those who master them) an education in themselves; they are models of critical method. Let the

student consider for instance how Mr. Eliot in the essay on Massinger, starting with comparisons between passages of Massinger's and Shakespeare's verse, arrives at judgments concerning the relative value of two ages. He will then, at any rate, understand the injunction to attach, as far as possible, all that he wants to say about a given work to observations concerning technique, and will be safe from the kinds of interest in 'technique' that produced Mr. Pound's "Melopoeia," "Phanopoeia," "Logopoeia," and the vowel-and-consonant analysis of the school manuals." (p. 27).

It is noteworthy that, as Mr. Leavis points out, Mr. Eliot achieves a qualitative political judgment as a by-product of evaluating particular poems. There is no paradox here. Since poems are actions, the quality or precise degree of intensity among diverse components or vehicles of the action is the index to the moral quality in the age that "produced" the poems. Valuations of this sort must be undertaken by the critic and must be honestly based on detailed and verifiable particulars of a particular passage of poetry. It is not, on the other hand, possible to arrive at a critical evaluation of a poem or an age from the point of view of rhetorical exegesis, as one can see in the work of Richards and Empson. Basically a rhetorical exegesis is concerned with indicating the "strategy" employed by a writer in bringing to bear the available means of persuasion. One can go on indefinitely describing the situation from which the strategy emerges, elaborating whole psychological and political treatises without ever reaching the point of critical evaluation.¹

¹The judgment of poetic evaluation indirectly involves a judgment of moral quality because poems, although not exhortations to action, are basically actions; and the quality of the poem involves the quality of the action. "What goes on in the poem" must be judged at least on the analogy of human ethics, but that is not to say that the poem advocates an ethic. The advocacy of any line of action is rhetorical; and thus "didactic poetry" is not organized poetically but rhetorically. As such it can enjoy a validity of its own. However, just as rhetoric and politics enter into a poem as matter or vehicle, ethics inheres as dramatic agency. Thus poetry cannot be organized without ethical vision but poetry can never, as such, perform the rhetorical task of inculcating morality. Insofar, therefore, as modern criticism has transferred its techniques of literary observation from psychology and anthropology, it has recovered a lost insight into many of the functions of language. Studies of language symbols as strategy in neurosis and dreams, or language as gesture and phatic com-

It is impossible to survey here the critical achievement of F. R. Leavis, but it is clear on every page that his method is that of an artistic evaluation which is inseparable from the exercise of a delicately poised moral tact. He is not a critic of isolated comments as the mere titles of his works show. For example, *New Bearings in English Poetry* is concerned with assessing the precise changes in the poetic climate which have occurred in consequence of the impact of Yeats, Eliot, Hopkins, and Pound on our language. On the other hand, *Revaluation* "was planned," he tells us, "when I was writing my *New Bearings in English Poetry*, . . . indeed, the planning of one book was involved in the planning of the other."

The function of both these books is, with reference to particular poets and poems, to show what has happened to that existing order of traditional English poetry, of which Mr. Eliot speaks, once genuinely new work has arrived. For order to persist, says Mr. Eliot, "after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new." The basic implication in this statement is that the entire literature of Europe is to be viewed as a single emergent work of art, having a dramatic principle of its own. Genuinely new work is thus like a new development in a play. It tells us something about the preceding events of the play which we could not have seen before, and it alters the relations and tensions between the events which have already occurred. At the same time the new event must be seen as inherent in the earlier dramatic movement. How profoundly Mr. Eliot has since interpreted this dramatic vision of history the reader of *Four Quartets* need not be told.

The entire effort of Mr. Leavis has been to realize by detailed

munion in the complex organic patterns of tribal communities have greatly deepened our perceptions in reading poetry. But neither psychologist nor anthropologist has approached his material with the means or the intention of evaluation. The psychologist has studied neurosis as individual strategy and the anthropologist has viewed tribal cultures as communal strategies for coping with a hostile environment. This strategical viewpoint is essentially one of rhetorical exegesis.

judgments of selected poems this insight in such a way as to make it available for general recognition and experience among intelligent readers. It represents not only a major critical effort but the extension and refinement of sensibility as the very mode of critical activity and of discriminatory reading and response.

There are further implications of importance for poetry in this position. All poetry, past and present, as forming a simultaneous order, becomes equally available for contemplation, and for the extension and ordering of sensibility. The perception of the traditional in modern poetry is thus an inevitable feature of enjoying the contemporaneity of past poetry. It is clear, however, that that which is contemporaneous in Shakespeare and that which is traditional in Hopkins is not the rhetoric, the psychology, or the politics. At least, this fact could easily be shown if need be. And so the rhetorical exegetist of poetry has no available technique for directing attention to one of the most essential facts which the critic of poetry must be able to focus at all times. Naturally, this elusive trait resides in the inevitable dramatic character of poems; and Mr. Leavis has concentrated attention on this feature in tracing "the line of wit."

There is thus a direction, an economy, and a concentrated relevance in the critical judgments of Leavis which are obviously lacking in Richards and Empson. Their virtuosity of erudition notwithstanding, Leavis, in his method of criticism, is dealing simultaneously with a greater variety of factors than Empson or Richards. He is in fact the more difficult writer. This can be illustrated quite easily from any of his essays. It is most convenient, however, to cite an exegesis of a passage from *Macbeth* (II, vi) since it is one of the few in his work which stand in isolation. Mr. Leavis submits it as an example of method in *How to Teach Reading* (pp. 29-31):

"... one's caveat against the habit of regarding Shakespeare as a great 'creator of characters' is not a mere pedantic whim. One turns up, say, Act II, Scene vi, of *Macbeth*—the scene under the battlements at Dunsinane:

Duncan. This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle sense.

Banquo. This guest of summer,
This temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his lov'd mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed, and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd,
The air is delicate.

Here is a good instance of Shakespeare's marvellous power of using words to compel on the reader or listener a precise complex response, to evoke the combination of emotions and associations appropriate to the context ('appropriate' clearly calls for analysis). We note the insistence, throughout the passage, of the element represented by 'pleasant,' 'sweetly,' 'gentle;' it is so insistent that it appears even in a place so apparently inappropriate (on editorial inspection) as to elicit from the Arden editor the comment: 'probably a proleptic construction.' But

the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself,

and the set of associations represented by 'nimble' is equally important in the whole: we are in hill air, which is not only sweet, but fresh and vital—a sharp contrast to the smothering sense, already evoked, of the 'blanket of the dark.' But that is not all; every word in the passage contributes. Why, for instance, 'temple-haunting?' It coöperates with 'guest' and 'heaven' to evoke the associations belonging to the 'sanctity of hospitality,' for 'heaven,' reinforced by 'temple,' is not merely the sky where the fresh winds blow. Nevertheless the suggestion of altitude is potent:

no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, . . .

—'above the smoke and stir of this dim spot.' But why 'martlet?' The bird, with its swift vitality and exquisite frail delicacy, represents a combination analogous to 'nimble and sweetly.' But more; its 'pendent bed,' secure above the dizzy drop, is its 'procreant cradle;' and 'procreant' is enforced by 'breeds:' all these suggestions, uniting again with those of

'temple' and 'heaven,' evoke the contrast to 'foul murder'—life springing swift, keen and vulnerable from the hallowed source.

"There is no need to enlarge upon the dramatic potency of the effect thus roughly analysed. And yet it is to a great extent independent of the speakers (though, of course, Banquo and Duncan bring in an intensifying irony). At any rate, it will be granted that an attention directed upon 'character' and psychology' is not favourably disposed for doing justice to the kind of thing Shakespeare does here with words."

Notice here how the rhetorical components of "character" and "speech" deriving from Banquo and Duncan are vigorously subordinated. At every point the imagery of these lines is considered as dramatically emergent from an earlier passage, contributing something startlingly new which is yet natural and prophetic of further development. The reader as spectator or contemplator is compelled to "a precise complex response." However, this compulsion is dictated not by any rhetorical persuasiveness or strategy but simply by the exigencies of a dynamic dramatic moment. There are a dozen points in this analysis where a rhetorical exegesis would have led us down exciting semantic and synecdochal vistas at the cost of missing the way in which the fusion of the elements occurred and is significant for the play as a whole.

It would be wholly unfair to leave the impression that Mr. Leavis merely derives from Mr. Eliot's extraordinarily fruitful criticism. The intense relevance of view and novelty of insistence in Mr. Eliot's early criticism was a by-product of his own problems as a craftsman. His poetic problems solved, his line of development assured, a distressing slackness overtook Mr. Eliot's prose. He ceased to function as a critic, or rather his critical comments became less and less related to his basic interests as a writer. Since his poetry has in no way suffered from this fact, it can be dismissed as a matter of little consequence. In the meantime, however, Mr. Leavis, with a rare sense of fact and without any chance of popular recognition, was engaged in executing the program which Mr. Eliot had indicated but relin-

quished. Just how well he succeeded the reader who has worked for six years with *Revaluation* is best able to say.

In a word, then, the method of Leavis has superior relevance to that of Richards and Empson because he has more clearly envisaged not only the way in which a poem functions, but the function of poetry as well. A poem in itself functions dramatically, not strategically or persuasively. It is for contemplation, and functions for the spectator or reader as a means of extending and refining moral perception or dramatic awareness. Where Mr. Leavis sees the function of poetry as the education or nourishment of the affections, Richards and Empson tend to regard it pragmatically and rhetorically as a means of impinging on a particular situation. Since the material or vehicle of all art is necessarily social symbol and experience, Richards and Empson have done a great service by insisting on the discriminating perception of the complex implications of this matter. They have made art respectable and redoubtable once more for all intelligent men. So much so that it is tempting to take up permanent residence in their halfway house and to overlook the arduous stage of the journey which remains to be accomplished before winning an overall view, which is plenary critical judgment.

THE NEW LEDA
ON HEARING THAT A FRIEND HAS ENTERED A
CONVENT

Goosegirl, your feet are slow
And heavy with acceptance, while the echo
Of what will come
Gathers momentum and batters at your eardrum.

The future hangs
Over you like an air-borne bell, its clangs
Will gut your heart, will keep
Up their reverberant assault, no sleep

Will be the same again;
Marked, muted by this inexorable hyphen
You cannot be the same;
There is no sanctuary, the god will come

And bed you in his plumage;
Intent, bird-lidded, knotted in his rage
Of lust he will flail down
Every abject appeal. . . . Quiet in gown

Of white the bride of Christ
Moves down the waiting nave as if her wrist
Were held and she led,
Hands heart obeying the seeing unseen Dead,

And she led on as though
Walking through shallow water, where the slow
Tide urges at her feet
But checks their driftwood longing. Will the sweet

Wan dedicated face,
Inward as some old painting, find a place
Of sweetest rest, a home
Now in the Spirit's mansion and catacomb?

Will she encounter love
Laughter, pain and grief, or will she live
For centuries encased
In waterglass serenity; the taste

Of a eternal death
In life upon her lips, although breath
Cannot fail? Her
Limbo holds her like a fly in amber,

Beyond the reach of life.
Sisters, wastrels, when will you have enough
Of sacrifice and harm
And deprivation? Remember the mighty arm

That, white and sick with strain,
Wrestled the whole night out until the plain
Was light and he could see,
Deep down the precipice of self, his adversary

And ask his blessing. Either
Make peace with yourselves, or live locked in such war
As, ruinous from the start,
Turns dark with pity Jacob's brazen heart.

by Barbara Hawes

THE SYMPHONY

We came too late to hear the violins and flutes,
Heard only the last notes sift through thin, static air,
Expire. Intolerable silence but transmutes
Our restlessness, augments unnatural despair
In the interminable interlude until
The brasses, agitated and cacophonous,
Take up the theme anew in quickened tempo, fill
The vacuum imperfectly, impelling us
To violence inexorably with separate flame.
The theme will be resolved when we have claimed once more
The deep atonal dark from which we briefly came,
Bereft of memory, that waits beyond the door.

by Thomas Haile

by Robert Selph Henry

AS GENERAL FORREST USED TO SAY—

THe most universally applicable and the most widely quoted (and almost universally mis-quoted) of all military aphorisms is not from the pen of Jomini or von Clausewitz or even Napoleon. It was coined from the common sense and fighting experience of Nathan Bedford Forrest, a man of no military education whatever, and indeed very little formal education of any sort, who at the age of forty enlisted as a private in the army of the Confederate States of America. Less than four years later, as a Lieutenant General, he surrendered the last Confederate force in arms east of the Mississippi River a month after Appomattox.

In this brief military career, Forrest engaged in affairs at arms almost innumerable. Three times he was wounded, twenty-nine times horses were shot under him. He raised regiments, brigades and divisions, time after time, and armed and equipped them, usually at the expense of the enemy. He conducted raids, surprises and pursuits, fought in great battles as well as small, planned and executed campaigns which have received the respectful study of commanders of armies in Europe as well as in America.

Forrest is remembered, however, not so much by what he did as by what he is supposed to have said, "Git thar fustest with the mostest men," a phrase which has caught the fancy of a world whose attention is focused on a war of supply and of movement.

Forrest's first recorded use of the phrase—or rather, the remark from which the familiar quotation is derived—was in a conversation at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, with John Hunt Morgan, the Kentucky raider. The two, both of whom had recently been made Brigadiers in recognition of their daring and successful

cavalry operations in the summer of 1862, were comparing notes. Basil Duke of Morgan's command was listening when Forrest explained his success with the somewhat impatient exclamation, "Oh, I just got there first with the most men."

That's the way Duke wrote it down, and so, too, did Federal officers to whom Forrest made the same remark afterward, when they met under flag of truce. Lieutenant General Dick Taylor, under whom Forrest served in the closing months of the war, made a like record of his remark, compacting into so few words so much of the art of war and the essence of victory.

It was not until 1905, forty years after the Confederate war, that a writer in the Memphis *Commercial-Appeal* started the self-conscious literary carpentry by which Forrest's simple formula for victory has been made over into the "quaint" form in which it is now nearly always quoted—"Git thar fustest with the mostest." No doubt Forrest pronounced *get* as *git*, *there* as *thar* and *first* as *fust*, that being the idiom of the time and place, but to a man of his limited literary education it would never have occurred to add the purely artificial double superlative endings to "first" and "most." Indeed, it did not occur to the embellishers of Forrest's phrase to add them both at once. The "mostest" appeared first, with the "fustest" as an inescapable corollary once someone started the thing.

The two extra endings have made Forrest and his remark famous, but they have, at the same time, made of the maxim something slightly humorous and of Forrest himself a character tinged with comedy. About Forrest and his remark as he spoke it, however, there is nothing of the comic. It was the deadly serious dogma of a man who took his fighting seriously.

Nor was there anything comic about the man himself, whether from the point of view of those whom he led or those against whom he fought. General Grant, reflecting upon the whole course of the Confederate war, rated Forrest as "about the ablest of their cavalry generals." To General Sherman, he was "that devil Forrest," who must be "hunted down and killed if it costs ten thousand lives and bankrupts the Federal treasury." Hardly

could a soldier win higher praise from those against whom he fought.

Forrest's men were called, and thought of themselves as, cavalry but they were not true cavalymen. Rather they were all-round soldiers who, as one of them wrote afterward, "enjoyed the respect of the army" instead of receiving the infantryman's "customary contempt for cavalry." So long as we followed Forrest, he wrote, "we were heroes, even to the infantry"—which is about as high praise as could be won by a body of troops.

Forrest's troops, indeed, were a sort of early model of today's Commandos. As Lieutenant-Colonel George T. Denison of the British Army put it in his standard *History of Cavalry*, under Forrest horse troops "could perform outpost duty with wonderful ability; they could dismount and fight in line of battle against infantry, cavalry or artillery; they could attack fortifications, capture gunboats, storm stockades, in fact do anything that could be expected of soldiers."

They were not a selected corps d'elite, but run-of-the-mine young Southerners, many of whom were secured during the latter part of the war by vigorous application of the conscript law, sometimes within the lines of the enemy. The methods by which Forrest made his sort of soldiers out of the material at hand were his own, original. He himself was a trooper with the best of them, not only in the front of battle but in the impossible marches by which he managed usually to "get there first," even though rarely did he have the "most men."

Bringing out of West Tennessee three thousand recruits and conscripts, mostly unarmed, at Christmas time of 1863, Forrest came to the swollen, freezing-cold and unbridged Hatchie River. The General himself—he was a Major General by that time—was arm-pit deep in the stream, helping to untangle a harnessed mule which had fallen in. Up on the bank was a hulking conscript—"big-mouthed he was," as a soldier of Forrest's escort remembered the incident, "big-mouthed, stompin' up and down, tellin' everybody that he wasn't goin' to get down in that water, not for nobody, no sir, he wasn't." Having completed his job

with the mule, the general clambered up the bank, quietly stepped up to the grumbler, grabbed him by the neck and the slack of his pants, lifted him high and flung him into the stream. "After that," the escort soldier said, "that fellow made a pretty good hand."

It was with this batch of recruits that Forrest, only six weeks later, turned upon seemingly overwhelming force sent against him, routed them at Okolona, Mississippi, and chased them half way back to Memphis. Not until he had won that victory and captured himself some more guns, was he able to complete the job of arming his new men.

Lafcadio Hearn, who happened to be in Memphis on the day of Forrest's funeral in 1877 and there picked up a lot of information about him, much of it from sources none too friendly, wrote that "he ruled his men so that they feared him more than the enemy, and yet confided in him as though he were incapable of an error or a fault." It is true that his soldiers recognized in him the qualities of sagacity, energy, courage and that most rare and uncommon quality called common sense, and so they gave him, as men and soldiers, an immense confidence. They went where he told them to go, and they did what he told them to do, because they believed in Old Bedford and because, when Old Bedford led, they believed in themselves.

But to President Jefferson Davis and the military authorities of the Confederate States, Forrest was no more than a "bold and enterprising partisan raider and rider," a sort of glorified guerrilla whose habit of winning battles by unorthodox methods could not make up for his lack of familiarity with the minutiae of army regulations and the fine print of the drill books.

This attitude is the more understandable in the light of Forrest's history. When he enlisted in June, 1861, he was worth by his own estimate a million and a half dollars, all of it earned by his own efforts by the time he was forty years old. But along with the trading in lands and livestock and cotton planting by which he had accumulated this considerable fortune, he had engaged in a large and conspicuous way in the buying and selling

of slaves. It was a business entirely legal at the time and place, but it is a commentary upon the South's "peculiar institution" that even among those who owned them, and who upon occasion bought and sold them, there attached to the traffic in slaves a certain social stain. And this was true even where, as in the case of Forrest, the dealer was more than usually kind to his human stock in trade. "There were men in Memphis," Lafcadio Hearn reported, "to whom Forrest would never sell a slave, because they had the reputation of being cruel masters."

When Forrest decided to go into the army, he called up forty-five of the slaves on his plantation in Mississippi and told them "that if they would go with me, if we got whipped they would be free anyhow, and that if we succeeded and slavery was perpetuated, if they would act faithfully with me to the end of the war, I would set them free." Forty-four of them were with him at the end, driving his teams, although for fear that he might be killed in battle, he had many months before set them free. George W. Cable, who as a very young Confederate soldier served for a time as a clerk in Forrest's headquarters, helped to make out the manumission papers.

In addition to the nature of his business, Forrest was further disqualified in the eyes of the Confederate authorities by his lack of formal education and by his open disdain for the then greatly revered "tactics," which meant, chiefly, the complicated manual of arms and the elaborate footings and facings of parade-ground drill. "Fifteen minutes of *bulge*," Forrest said, "is worth a week of *tactics*."

Forrest is supposed to have had three months of schooling in the hamlet of Chapel Hill, Tennessee, where he was born in 1821, and where he lived until he was thirteen, when the family migrated to Tippah County, Mississippi, a frontier section recently opened to settlement by the removal of the Chickasaw Nation to the Indian Territory. There Forrest had three months more of school before he was sixteen. In that year his blacksmith father William died, leaving the eldest son Bedford and his dauntless mother Mariam to face together the task of bringing up a family of nine

younger children, soon to be enlarged by the posthumous birth of another son. Young Bedford's life was to be one of "poverty, toil and responsibility."

Though he lacked formal education, Forrest was by no means the illiterate ignoramus. His surviving writing is clear, direct and distinctly to the point, despite unconventional spelling. He would not be bothered with such extra and entirely unnecessary letters as the "a" in the word "headquarters" but there was no room for doubt as to his meaning when he wrote across a thrice-repeated application for furlough—according to an apocryphal but entirely typical story—"I have tole you twict goddamit No!"

Some of the most frequently repeated examples of weird spelling attributed to him, however, are pure invention. There is, for example, his alleged report of the capture of Fort Pillow, starting with "we busted the fort at ninerclock" and continuing with the details of how "the boys is acillin' 'em down in the woods." Convincing evidence that there was no such report caused the editors of the publication in which it first appeared to omit it from later editions, but the story continues to be picked up and reprinted from time to time as evidence both of Forrest's illiteracy and his ferocity.

All observers agree that when Forrest's tempestuous temper was aroused, his language was profanely violent. Men who knew him, however, found in his fierce outburst nothing of wanton cruelty, while children adored him. One youngster, writing long afterward, recalled him as "a stalwart man, who habitually went in his shirt sleeves and spoke kindly to children." In a society which took its liquor hard and treated tobacco as a staple of life, he drank not at all, smoked never, and did not even "chew."

Military rank was not needed to mark him as a man of commanding presence. There was some six-foot-two of him, lithe and powerful of build, with steady eyes of deep grey-blue, set wide in a lean, high-cheeked, swarthy face crowned with thick, wavy iron-gray hair and set off with a short chin-beard—altogether, as

recollections and surviving photographs agree, a man strikingly handsome, who would have stood out in any crowd.

Forrest first attracted attention at Fort Donelson, in February, 1862, when he refused to allow his men to be surrendered with the rest of the garrison, no matter what his superior officers might say or do. While the bugles were blowing in the darkness for the parley in which U. S. Grant's initials acquired new meaning by his unyielding insistence upon no terms but "unconditional surrender," Forrest marched his regiment out through the frozen backwaters of the Cumberland to become from that time forward increasingly a man of mark in the western armies of the Confederacy.

His fighting methods were as much his own as were his methods of training. Nearly always inferior in numbers, he usually managed to "get there" at the decisive place, and to do it "first," at the critical time, "with the most," the superior force. Sometimes he accomplished it, as in his military masterpiece of Brice's Cross Roads, by fighting a desperate holding battle with part of his command in front of an enemy of overwhelming strength, while another part swung out to strike the deciding blow upon the flank.

Once, indeed, after he had beaten back three overwhelming invasions of the area in Mississippi which he was assigned to defend, he despaired of meeting in battle the still more overwhelming fourth expedition sent out from Memphis against him. But even then he found a way to accomplish results. Leaving part of his force in front of the enemy to keep up a demonstration, he cut loose with a selected column, covered 115 miles in two days, during which he had to bridge two considerable streams, and at dawn on a Sunday morning raided the Union base at Memphis, barely missed capturing the Union commander in that area in his night-shirt, and forced the recall of the invading column.

What Forrest could have accomplished had he been trusted with larger forces, no one can say. What he did, was to make the most of what he had in every situation. "He continually grew

in power to the last," wrote one scholarly soldier under whom he served, "and was ever greater than his opportunities."

Viscount Garnet Wolseley, then General-in-Chief of the British Imperial forces, wrote in 1892:

If ever England has to fight for her existence . . . may we have at the head of our government as wise and far-seeing a patriot as Mr. Lincoln, and to lead our mounted troops as able a leader as General Forrest!

The British commander of fifty years ago could not have foreseen that today's "mounted troops" would, for the most part, ride on wings and wheels but even if he had had the gift of prophecy, doubtless he still would have put his trust in the man whose fundamental rule of victory, "get there first with the most," is the very antithesis of "too little and too late."

by Arnold Stein

METER AND MEANING IN DONNE'S VERSE

All Donne's poems are equally metrical (misprints allowed for) though smoothness (i.e., the metre necessitating the proper reading) be deemed appropriate to songs; but in poems where the writer thinks, and expects the reader to do so, the sense must be understood in order to ascertain the metre.

—COLERIDGE.

WHAT is the ultimate test of the prosody of a line of verse? It is possible to compile a system of metrical variations which will explain nearly all of Donne's lines that strongly depart from the norm. Yet one may easily seem to be underestimating the influence of this norm, which is really considerable. Many readers of poetry have so powerful an impression of this ideal pattern that it enables them to defy stress-shift by giving more mental stress to the syllable which everyday pronunciation would make light. One prosodist, Chard P. Smith, even maintains that "there is no shift of the accent [i.e., metrical stress] . . . no substitution of a trochee for an iamb. The accent [stress] remains where it falls and there is, *in addition*, a prose stress [prose accent] on the unaccented [unstressed] syllable." Thus the ten syllables of the heroic line, according to this theory, correspond one by one with the ten of the base, and a syllable may be accented though not stressed.

This opinion is held by many readers of poetry, though few would carry it to such an extreme, or admit it if they did. And it will work out fairly well in lines where the base is strongly asserted and makes a deep, tenacious impression on the reader. But this approach loses its validity when one is dealing with verse the meaning of which is more important than the music. Cole-

ridge's distinction, quoted at the head of this essay, is useful in emphasizing the difference between these two kinds of verse. A similar, more explicit, distinction between "song-verse" and thoughtful "speech-verse" has been made by Egerton Smith. Song-verse, "nearer to music, tends to conceive of verse as dominated by the metrical sound-scheme and the melodic effect. The other kind, nearer to prose-speech, is dominated by the sense or thought-scheme."

In considering Donne's *Satires* we need have no more concern than did the author for "melodic effect." That is one compelling reason why we cannot accept a theory like the one offered by Légouis in *Donne the Craftsman*, that Donne was really writing the old four-stress verse lamented as lost by Gascoigne. It would mean that Donne was more intent on melody than meaning, and was trying to decorate these satires with lilting rhythms. This proposal is a symbol of the despair with which Donne may inspire prosodists—and there have been many—who believe that only the "normal" foot is "correct." To read Donne as if every foot were an ideal iambic is impossible; that is, except by such esoteric methods as reading with "hovering accent," "level stress," or "veiled rhythm:" and these consist in refusing to commit oneself audibly, while enjoying infinitely delicate rhythms within the private recesses of one's own ear. Another symbol of despair is the assertion that Donne's only metrical concern was to write ten syllables. But this is to attribute most of his dramatic and rhetorical emphasis to accident rather than to art—a proposition which can hardly be maintained.

The trend of recent criticism has been to emphasize the importance of meaning in determining the metrical structure of Donne's verse. In this respect contemporaries are anticipated by Coleridge and De Quincey. The remarks of Coleridge are better known: that to read Donne you must read "as the sense and passion demand," "with all the force and meaning which are involved in the words;" "you must measure *time*, and discover the time of each word by the sense of passion;" "the sense must be understood in order to ascertain the metre." De Quincey's criticism,

also far in advance of his age, has been mentioned less often than it deserves:

The very first eminent rhetorician in English literature is Donne. Dr. Johnson inconsiderately classes him in company with Cowley & c., under the title of *Metaphysical Poets*; but Rhetorical would be a more accurate designation. In saying that, however, we must remind our readers that we revert to the original use of the word *rhetoric*, as laying the principal stress upon the management of the thoughts, (the *dispositio*), and only a secondary one upon the ornaments of style, (the *elocutio*).

This emphasis on the rhetoric, on the sense which ascertains the meter, is of course the correct approach, but even here critics have gone astray. George Williamson, in many ways a sensitive critic of Donne, speaks of the intruding "rhythm of prose, accenting the sense and not the sound, to the wrenching of the metrical rhythm." Evidently he regards the prose rhythm as a sort of enemy to the metrical rhythm, "wrenching" it; and he confuses the metrical rhythm with the metrical pattern—a different thing entirely. He has high respect for the sense, especially when it coincides with the sound—by which he means, when the modulation is confined to the slight adjustments within each syllable, and no adjustment is heavy enough to cause a stress-shift. He can even be pleased "when sound is sacrificed a little to sense." But this is the limit of his confidence in the "sense"; for "when, as in the satires, sound is sacrificed almost altogether to sense, he gives us the jarring monstrosities which even his admirers cannot condone."

Almost all the modern critics have said eloquent things about the suitability of Donne's rhythm to his state of mind—however, without committing themselves as to the state of his rhythm, though they have not hesitated to intrude themselves into the innermost recesses of his mind. His versification has often been glibly compared with the versification of Jacobean drama, though no one has evidently thought it worth-while to do more than make the analogy. Perhaps C. S. Lewis is right when he says

that "most modern readers of poetry do not know how to scan," that "Donne may be metrically good or bad, in fact; but it is obvious that he might be bad to any degree without offending the great body of his modern admirers."

Certainly one may find fault with those who in print admire Donne's poetry, and even his versification, yet think it beneath the dignity of criticism to indicate, except in the vaguest terms, how a line should read. Even relatively clear statements concerning Donne's metrical practise are marred by a critical cautiousness. Take for instance Grierson's remarks—among the clearest one can find—on the relation between meter and meaning in Donne:

The wrenching of accent [i.e., metrical stress] which Jonson complained of is not entirely due to carelessness or indifference. It has often both a rhetorical and a harmonious justification. Donne plays with rhythmical effects as with conceits and words.

This is not far from the truth, but how much more convincing it would be with a few illustrations of stress-shift rhetorically and harmoniously justified! Or take a statement by another good critic of Donne's poetry, Miss Joan Bennett:

Often the rhythm is as intricate as the thought and only reveals itself when the emphasis has been carefully distributed according to the sense.

Does this mean that Miss Bennett would read Donne's verse solely according to the sense, as if it were prose? It would seem not, though one may suspect that this is the practise of many contemporary enthusiasts. Miss Bennett, however, does not appear to understand or recognize stress-shift by attraction,¹ or otherwise she would never say that the following line is "defective" and "demands slower reading"—an evasion familiar to temporal prosodists:

¹A stress-shift, reversing the normal flow of the rhythm, can be strong enough in its impulse to attract succeeding rhythmic waves into the new current.

Nor *long*/beare this torturing *wrong*
A Feaver, I, 21, 18.

And if she does not understand Donne's use of stress-shift, especially by attraction, how can she—except by concealing her stresses with extra slow reading—pretend to understand Donne's metrical emphasis?

Poetry is not to be read as prose, solely according to sense; nor as verse, solely according to meter, regardless of sense. Meter is an important part of the musical element in poetry, but still this is only one element; and whenever it comes into conflict with sense it is forced to submit, or what is more accurate, to compromise. The modification of meter to suit the sense actually improves the rhythmical beauty by furnishing variety and welcome modulations. On the other hand, the meter certainly aids the expression of the sense, by affording beauty of form, and in the case of a poet like Donne, added point and emphasis.

Only one conscientious attempt has been made to study the emphasis which Donne secures by his metrical technique. It is W. F. Melton's *The Rhetoric of John Donne's Verse*, dedicated to the principle of secondary accent and the theory of arsis-thesis variation. This is another version of C. P. Smith's theory by which metrical stress is unvaried—though subtle, and therefore unrecordable, changes in pitch are allegedly maintained. Melton's ideas may best be illustrated by quoting an example of his scansion:

Witty now *wise*, now *temperate* now *just*.
 In *good* short *lives*, *virtues* are *fain* to *trust*

My Muse—for I had one—because I'm cold
 Divorced herself, the cause being in me.

Thus "witty" and "virtues" may receive a stress on the second syllable, and "herself" and "the" are pronounced according to their place in the metrical pattern. If it had not been for his theory and "accurate instruction in regard to the scansion of

verse"—Melton's own words—he too “might have ‘hung’ Donne, and passed on.” Instead, it is plain, he lingers to torture him.

Any theory dependent on the evidence of scansion like this can hardly be acceptable. And in this respect Melton does much to obscure the real importance of his arsis-thesis theory, according to which Donne is supposed to emphasize words and sounds by putting them first in a stressed and then in an unstressed position. It is truly painful to see all this enthusiastic spendthrift labor, and Melton's jubilant exultation is a depressing caution as he marches after his theory, as if it were a banner, eyes front. His observation is correct to the extent that Donne, often uses the same word or phrase or sound in what is—according to the basic pattern—now arsis, now thesis. And the close proximity of these repetitions will naturally cause a sort of reinforcement that produces increased rhetorical emphasis. It is not especially significant whether the repetitions are in stressed or unstressed places (and Donne is by no means consistent, even according to the pattern), for internal adjustments of weight, from syllable to syllable, will provide more variety and subtle emphasis than Melton on his see-saw.

Even Puttenham, who would train young Pegasus to plod foot for foot in harness with the heavy-paced iamb, recognizes that an exception must sometimes be made for the sake of emphasis. The remarks that he makes on this subject are particularly significant, and innocently reveal the shortcomings of his and his contemporaries' prosodic theories. A word “inferring a subtiltie or wittie implication, ought not to have the same accent as when he hath no such respect.” To illustrate this he provides an example:

Geve me mine owne and when I do desire,
Geve others theirs, and nothing that is mine,
Nor give me that wherto all men aspire.

The unusual emphasis given the first “me,” according to Puttenham, is due to its relation with “others.” In another illustration,

Prove me (Madame) ere ye *reprove*;
Meeke minds should *excuse* not *accuse*

he says that, because of the "extraordinary sence," "it behoveth to remove the sharpe accents from whence they are most naturall, to place them where the nicke may be more expresly discovered."

This is what poets often do, especially those who, like Donne, love fine distinctions. In this respect one may compare another Elizabethan equally fond of quibbles, Shakespeare. A line like the following is by no means unusual:

Love bade me swear, and Love bids me forswear
The Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, vi, 6.

His sonnets are full of the insistent repetitions Melton has observed in Donne, but these are certainly not ordered into any scheme of arsis-thesis variation. On one occasion Shakespeare has a character repeat the word "legitimate" five times within the space of six lines, always with a different rhythm, squeezing every last drop of implication out of the word. But this serves a special dramatic purpose, for it is the bastard Edmund (*King Lear*, I, ii, 16-21) contemplating his brother Edgar.

This kind of repetition is of course an old rhetorical device. Quintilian discusses it, and quotes Cicero's remark that repetition can produce either grace or strength. Donne's use very seldom resembles that of the lyric poets who so beautifully echo and re-echo, yet he can combine both grace and force in a striking repetition:

If thou stay here. O stay here, for, for thee
Elegy XVI, I, 112, 43.

More often, however, his repetitions are not so harmonious, nor are they meant to be. One cannot forget his taste for mental dissection, and for turning ideas over and over again, to see them from all aspects. He plays with words, and with sounds, in the same way, afraid to let them go until every slightest implication has been realized. Sometimes the results warrant this insistence on subtlety; at other times he is little short of ridiculous; but the

style is a true reflection of his taste and his mind, and if we do not like it we do not like what is characteristic of Donne. Occasionally in his repetitions he may be following rhetorical methods, as in the line,

All his cloathes, Copes; / Bookes, / Primers; and all^a
I, 170, 66.

where he begins and ends with the same word. Or he may repeat a word for greater emphasis:

Like a Kings favourite, yea like a King
I, 152, 70
where these
Meet in one, that one must, as perfect please
Elegy II, 1, 80, 10.

Or he may repeat words slightly altered, or used in a different sense:

All things are *one*, and that *one* none can be,
Since all *formes*, *uniforme deformity*
Doth cover, so that *wee*, except God say
Another Fiat, shall have no more day.
So violent, and long *these furies bee*,
That though thine absence sterve *me*, 'I wish not *thee*.
The Storme, I, 177, 69-74.

In this passage we may observe the repetition of sounds as well as words. This too is a characteristic—often an unpleasant one—of Donne's taste, for he seems to love these jingles and cultivates them with assiduous delight. But he can nevertheless employ assonance for a deliberate artistic effect, as in the admirable passage from Elegy XIV:

But oh her minde, that Orcus, which includes
Legions of mischiefs, countlesse multitudes
Of formlesse curses, projects *unmade up*,
Abuses yet *unfashion'd*, thoughts corrupt,
Mishapen Cavils, palpable *untroths*.

^aAll references are to Grierson's two-volume edition: to volume, page and line respectively.

Inevitable errours, self-accusing oaths;
 These, like those *Atoms* swarming in the *Sunne*,
 Throng in her bosome for creation.
 I blush to give her halfe her due; yet say,
 No poyson's halfe so bad as *Iulia*.

I, 105, 23-32.

But repetition of word, syllable, or sound can become a tiresome device that defeats its own end and produces monotony rather than emphasis. Fortunately, Donne does not rely on this technique so much as Melton thinks; nor does he depend particularly on rhetorical figures, though he uses them with great skill and aptness. He is most often emphatic by means of a highly developed metrical technique.

One kind of emphasis may be seen in the famous lines,

I Wonder by my troth, what thou, and I
 Did, till we lov'd

The good-morrow, I, 7, 1-2

For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love

The Canonization, I, 14, 1.

Here there are no stress-shifts, though each line uses the iambic form only as a base for its own rhythms, the while making subtle variations, impossible to record exactly, within each syllable. Yet the iambic pattern which is implicit in these lines gives them a beauty and a force beyond the reach of mere prose. It is true that we pronounce these words with their prose accent, but we nevertheless have the iambic pattern in our heads, and though we delight in varying it, we will not violate it. And so, we give extra emphasis to the first syllable of "wonder" and "Godsake," to "hold" and even to "by"—not distorting our prose accent, but reinforcing it a little with the metrical stress that happily coincides with the rhetorical emphasis of the line.

This kind of reinforcement becomes particularly emphatic when

*"By," coming as it does just before "my," will be stressed a little more than might be expected in such a colloquial passage. In a passage where the basic pattern is strongly felt, a very light syllable may be reinforced by what is known as subjective stress; but not if two stress-compelling syllables follow immediately.

The result helps explain why Donne never hesitates to use stress-shift when other metrical resources will not achieve the degree of emphasis he desires.

In conclusion, we come to Donne's most frequent metrical variation, and the one by which he secures his most important em-

phasis—stress-shift by attraction. If we ignore his use of this device a large number of lines, including some of his best verse, will make little or no metrical sense. Take for instance the famous line,

at their best
Sweetnesse and wit/, they'are but Mummy, possesst
Loves Alchymie, I, 40, 24.

Melton would accord full stress to the second syllable of "mummy," making the line indescribably jingly, and causing the rhythm to rise, like the gallop of a merry-go-round Pegasus, to exactly the same height. Or what metrical sense can one make of this line, without recognizing the stress-shifts?—

Love might make me leave loving, or might trie
A deeper plague
Loves Deitie, I, 54, 24.

The rhythm which is strong enough to attract more than one stress-shift brings dramatic emphasis, not to a word or two, but to the whole line. And this is the sort of emphasis particularly well adapted to convey the determined athletic reasoning of Donne's intellect, and the pleasure which it takes in the exertion of its own strength. In lines like these we recognize the authentic voice of Donne, and once they are scanned they speak for themselves:

Wilt thou grin or fawne on him, or prepare I, 146, 23
Satan will not joy at their sinnes, as hee I, 152, 80
Sooner may one guesse, who shall beare away I, 147, 57
Are they not like singers at doores for meat I, 150, 22
Like a wedge in a blocke, wring to the barre,
Bearing-like Asses; and more shamelesse farre I, 152, 71-72.
Where are those spred woods which cloth'd heretofore
Those bought lands? not built, nor burnt within dore.
Where's the old landlords troops, and almes? In great hals I, 153, 103-05.

This is the real rhetoric of Donne's verse, requiring no formula or key to understand it, but requiring that the sense guide the prosody, and that the prosody guide the sense.

AMERICAN LITERARY HISTORY

THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION. The Development of Literature in the United States Recorded by the Men who Made It. Edited by Edmund Wilson. Garden City. Doubleday, Doran and Company. 1943. \$5.00.

THE AMERICAN WAY OF POETRY. By Henry W. Wells. New York. Columbia University Press. 1943. \$2.75.

RETURN TO THE FOUNTAINS. Some Classical Sources of American Criticism. By John Paul Pritchard. Durham. Duke University Press. 1942. \$3.00.

MELVILLE'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT. An Essay in Interpretation. By William Braswell. Durham. Duke University Press. 1943. \$3.00.

Charles Lamb once remarked of a collection of ill-assorted essays that the only connective in the book had been supplied by the binder. In justification of the omnibus character of this review I can say that the connective in it is not merely the fact that the books considered deal with various aspects of American literary history. What they have in common, more particularly, is a novelty of subject or approach. Is it not remarkable that Mr. Wilson is the first to put together an anthology whose purpose is to show the stimulus one American writer has furnished another? Why should we have had to wait so long for someone to attempt what Mr. Wells has undertaken, to analyze, that is, the ways in which American life has conditioned the form and matter of our poetry? One might have supposed that some classical scholar, since classicists spend a good deal of time rethreshing old straw, would have forestalled Mr. Pritchard in reaching for so fresh a subject as the influence of Aristotle and Horace in American criticism. The revival of interest in Melville began more than twenty years ago, yet Mr. Braswell's book is the first adequate discussion of Melville's metaphysics. The moral is obvious: we have just begun to explore our cultural traditions. The critic has only to stretch out a hand and ripe subjects well worth his time will drop into it.

Using as his touchstone a sentence of Melville's, "for genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round," Mr. Wilson has assembled 1300 pages of documents which show the effect of American

writing on the first-rate American writers. His aim is to reveal "the developing self-consciousness of the American genius from the moment in the middle of the last century when we first really had a literature worth talking about to the moment toward the end of the second decade of ours when it was plain that, following the cultural slump of the period after the Civil War, a new movement had got under way." In two instances he has departed from this program, in order to include a few selections by outlanders (Mallarmé, Wells, D. H. Lawrence) and a few examples of the shock "which occurs when the very good writer is confronted by the very bad."

The way of the writer has not been easy in this pioneering, puritanical, money-making country. Even today, when he may have a large public (if he is willing to be concessive) it is not always the public he wants which he gets. American writers have been lonelier folk than their European peers and more dependent on the comprehension of their friends. The record of the moments of friendly recognition set forth by Mr. Wilson is a moving one. It is a brilliant one, too, so far as the art of writing is concerned. The compiler has known where to go for good pieces, but there is significance in the fact that he has not come back with a dull page.

Some of the selections were inevitable and are well known, though they take on a new lustre in this context. Of such are Melville's rhapsodic "Hawthorne and his Mosses," written only a few days before the two met and became friends; Henry James's *Hawthorne* (entire); Mark Twain's "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses." Mr. Wilson rescues from oblivion Lowell's early and cordial essay on Poe, written for *Graham's Magazine*, but republished by Griswold in suspiciously mutilated form. He has collected most of the documents describing the friendship of Whitman and Emerson, omitting, however, the recently discovered letter of Emerson recommending Whitman to Secretary Chase. Other items now fortunately got inside the covers of a book are James's valedictory to America by way of an essay on Howells (1886), Eliot's two pieces on James, buried in the

Little Review (August, 1918), and Sherwood Anderson's letters to Van Wyck Brooks (1918-1938).

It is no slight to Mr. Wilson's discrimination in making his selections to wish some items had been displaced to make room for others. A few pieces from earlier years would have been welcome: such, for instance, as the elder Dana's tribute to C. B. Brown or Bryant's defense of America as a subject for fiction in his review of Miss Sedgwick's *Redwood*. In spite of Mr. Wilson's declared intention of working forward from the mid-century, he might have broken this prescript as suitably as he did another rule in order to include the more than a hundred pages of Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*.

One other selection I could bear to part with, Henry Adams' life of George Cabot Lodge. Fascinating as it is for what it suggests about Adams, I suspect Mr. Wilson included it because, as a critic, he was puzzled to know why Adams undertook the work at all. It has evoked, it is true, one of the best of Mr. Wilson's introductory essays, and that is excuse enough for its inclusion. Here, and in the instance of his Poe essay, one sees the shock of recognition working powerfully on the compiler. Without intending to do so, Mr. Wilson has anthologized himself.

A book which bears the title *The American Way of Poetry* cannot expect to get by the sentry without a challenge. Mr. Wells tries to stave off trouble by declaring in his introduction that "no important literary values are merely national or local," but he cannot get back into camp with this softly-spoken password. He has written a book of over two hundred pages which proves, incidentally, that the pressure on our poets of American climate, religious and social ideas, regions and speech, has resulted in a good deal of excellent poetry. He should not turn his back on his own demonstration.

The careful reader of Mr. Wells's book will vibrate between delight caused by the sharp observations which turn up on nearly every page and alarm at unexamined statements and generalizations which sometimes run wild in a succeeding paragraph. What does he mean, for example, when he speaks of "Ulalume" as

Poe's "most triumphant and comprehensive experiment in *imagism*"? In what possible sense is Frost, the lone-striker who expects each man to fight it out with his own fists, to be thought of as a romantic humanitarian? Is it true that Melville's *Clarel* "chiefly expresses the immense force of transcendental idealism"? Is it safe to observe that Poe might have escaped the limitations of his sentimentality, triteness, and vulgarity had he been born an Englishman? (Dickens was similarly limited.) What, one asks, is peculiarly "New World" in Poe's tragic disillusionment? The French symbolists, if they did not possess it originally, readily acquired it. May one, indeed, call Poe's verse tragic and disillusioned, since most of it is amoral? Are American poets more at odds with the materialistic majority than Shelley, Swinburne, or Auden? *Et seq.*

If Mr. Wells occasionally misses the target altogether, he more often makes a bull's-eye. His perfect shots are not confined to the excellent chapters on Freneau, Poe, Emerson, Melville, and Dickinson, though many of them, for some reason, are concentrated in these areas. No one before has defined so exactly the special quality of Freneau's verse, as it was shaped by his criterion of vitality, motion, and his passion for dynamic change. Mr. Wells could have made much of his perceptive remark that Emerson's realism "foreshadows the course of twentieth-century American verse style far better than does Whitman's," but the observation is none the less useful. Also penetrating is his note on Emily Dickinson's metaphysical use of domestic imagery in which she followed, without knowing it, an earlier New England poet, Edward Taylor.

The chapter in summation, "The American Way of Poetry," is just and sober in its claims, but the chief value of the book lies certainly in its sudden and random insights. As I have implied, more of the argument might profitably have been built upon them, but they redeem the near misses. Even these will serve to keep the reader in a pleasantly irritable state.

Mr. Pritchard's *Return to the Fountains* is the kind of book professors call "useful", with implications which may or may not

be complimentary. I do not intend the adjective to be read ambiguously. The book is useful in the sense that it will be used. Very little that is illuminating has been written about the course of critical writing in America; consequently any book has its uses if it clears the way for a solid account of what American critics have been up to during the past century and a half.

Mr. Pritchard seeks to estimate the extent to which our leading writers (critics included), from Bryant to Stuart Sherman, were acquainted with Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*, the "fountains" to which they "returned." What can be found out about the matter—the number of times Holmes alludes to Horace or More anchors his judgment of a contemporary writer in Aristotle—Mr. Pritchard has duly set down. This record, I repeat, is useful. However, his method and his self-imposed limitations so restrict him that an oddly distorted picture results.

Because Mr. Pritchard seldom looks up from Horace and Aristotle, one gets the impression from his book that when one of our earlier writers ignored these two authors his critical principles were drifting without the benefit of navigational instruments. The reader should have been reminded that though Poe, Bryant, Longfellow, and Hawthorne knew next to nothing of the *Poetics*, they had nevertheless been educated in a critical tradition, to wit, the Longinian tradition of the Scottish rhetoricians whose influence was powerful in the American college of their day. To complete the background Mr. Pritchard should also have indicated that the early critics were exploring ideas, such as the doctrine of functionalism in art, which were to have a peculiarly American development. Since he does not provide this context and background, he seems to impute a kind of perversity to those American critics who were busy with other matters when they should have been studying Aristotle. One may believe that Poe was better occupied in elaborating the ideas contained in "The Philosophy of Composition" than he would have been in trying to apply the doctrines of the *Poetics* to a kind of poetry unknown in Aristotle's time.

Naturally the later chapters of this book are the best. When

Mr. Pritchard comes to men like Woodberry, Babbitt, and More who were acknowledged Aristotelians he has abundant material to work with. Still, he might have noticed, I think, that the Aristotelianism of these writers was their weakness as well as their strength. More chastened our delight in *The Scarlet Letter* and *Ghosts* and many another work because they do not measure up to Stagiritic standards. The noisy opponents of More and his friends resented, with some justice, the imputation that because they enjoyed writers the new humanists would not admit into the pantheon they were by that token vulgarians.

Mr. Braswell gives his *Melville's Religious Thought* the modest subtitle *An Essay in Interpretation*. He would be the first to deny that it is yet possible to speak definitively of Melville's whole intent in *Mardi*, *Pierre*, or *The Confidence Man*, or even in *Moby Dick*, but his book has certainly brought us much nearer the time when such speaking will be possible. He argues his conclusions from tested biographical data, from carefully assembled clues in the novels, from Melville's annotations in books which impressed him deeply, but more than this, he makes the kind of enlightened, imaginative guess, based on these facts, which leads to genuine understanding.

After a preliminary chapter concerned with the religious pressures exerted on Melville by his family and by his reading, the book proceeds chronologically, and rightly so, since Melville's thinking was not static and each of the novels represents a shift or development in his metaphysics. The next two chapters show more clearly and strikingly than has been done before how three deeply-felt emotional attitudes conflicted to induce in Melville such mental anguish as few writers have experienced. He could not down the old questions and the cruel answers of his inherited Calvinism. But these were challenged by two new attitudes which operated quite as powerfully in his life. At the time of the writing of *Mardi* he had resolved to follow reason as the means of extricating himself from his metaphysical difficulties. He guessed the danger, to himself and to his art, of this plunge into the void of abstractions and he was testing at the same time an-

other way through the deserts of speculation—the religion of the heart which reveals the divinity in man. Taji, Ahab, and Pierre are all demi-gods whose prototype is Prometheus, the deliverer as well as the heretic. If Deity cannot be fathomed, or if it proves to be, when known, as cruel as the Leviathan-god of *Moby Dick*, then there is left, at least, the marvel and the splendor of valor-ruined men who struggle to fathom and defeat its malignancy.

In the chapter entitled "Accuser of Deity" Mr. Braswell develops the idea that Melville was consciously writing a wicked book, not merely a book with a wicked character in it, when he undertook *Moby Dick*. It is possible to read the novel as deliberately heretical, but in doing so Mr. Braswell passes over certain chapters which might embarrass his thesis. The key sentence of the novel (if one may be so temerous as to try to epitomize it) is found, I think, in the significant "Try Works" chapter: "There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness." It seems inescapable that Melville intends us to agree that Ahab has gone farther than man should go in accusing Deity.

If Mr. Braswell identifies Melville rather too closely with Ahab, I believe he goes too far in the opposite direction by withdrawing Melville's support from the hero of *Pierre*. The crux of this novel is certainly the implications which are to be read out of the Plinlimmon pamphlet. Mr. Braswell contends that Melville by this time held to the "virtuous expediency" which the pamphlet recommends, thus abandoning his hero to his folly in rejecting such a course. If this is the proper reading of the pamphlet, then the shift in Melville's attitude is a sudden reversal of his position in *Moby Dick* rather than a development of it.

The chapter on the symbolism of *Mardi* and *Pierre*, though it offers novel answers to some of the problems presented by these novels, overworks, I believe, the system of symbols which Mr. Braswell uncovers in them. One feels as one reads the chapter that Melville's imagination is being settled into a straight jacket. The excellent final chapter of the book, "The Long Search for

Peace," though it might go farther with the allegorical meanings of *Billy Budd*, presents the best account yet written of Melville's resolution of the question which had caused him, and his generation, so much agony of mind.

If Mr. Braswell, now a lieutenant in the Navy, is navigating on the high seas as successfully as he plots his way in the dangerous waters of Melville criticism, he will be an Admiral before the war is over.

WILLARD THORP

THE NEW TREASURY OF WAR POETRY, 1939 TO 1943

THE NEW TREASURY OF WAR POETRY, 1939 TO 1943. Edited by George Herbert Clarke. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1943. Introduction. Pp. 285.

Dr. Clarke, English born and bred; Canadian grown and educated; but equally at home and domiciled in both the States and Canada; distinguished poet, critic and editor of well known quarterlies in both countries, needs no introduction to the English speaking literary world. Moreover no one could be better fitted to present the *New Treasury* than the editor of the two *Treasuries of War Poetry* of the last war, which have run over 50,000 copies and were so widely acclaimed.

The reader will appreciate the workmanlike editing of the volume: the grouping of the poems under their subject matter and the triple index of First Lines, of Titles and of Authors. In addition there are valuable notes on each contributor.

But, above all, he will be grateful for Professor Clarke's admirable introduction ushered in by the "rolling thunder" of Milton's *Agonistes*:

O, how comely it is, and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long oppressed,
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might,

To quell the mighty of the earth, the oppressor,
The brute and boisterous force of violent men,
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous, and all such as honour truth!"

If Milton is not "living at this hour," he has certainly divined it and matched it.

Dr. Clarke opens his introduction with the words, "What is the business, the problem, the special concern of Poetry?" "This anthology," he tells us, "attempts a poetic survey of the objective deeds and experiences of the United Nations and of their subjective defences and advances as well."

With tireless industry and with a desire to pass by no prophet, and no interpreter of any aspect of the War who may in one way or another have a poetic message for us, Professor Clarke has collected well over a hundred poems. American poets are generously represented, not only when they glorify their own country, as in William Rose Benét's *The Great Land*, but also when they pay tribute to the worth and valor of the defeated nations, as in Joseph Auslander's *Prayer to Jehanne of France*, William Rose Benét's *Salute to Czechoslovakia!*, or Clark Mills' *A Pastoral for Poland*. But, as might be expected, the British and the Dominion poets are conspicuous both in numbers and in excellence. John Masfield figures with two poems taken from his *The Nine Days Wonder*, altogether worthy of the valor of the British soldiers and sailors they commemorate. Three specimens of the verse of the late Laurence Binyon appear, one of England's greatest contemporary poets. Then, there is the sylvan grace of Lord Dunsany, and of Jan Struther, while Lord Gorell in Tyrtæan lines nobly exhorts his countrymen to stand firm. This reviewer regrets that Dr. Clarke accords himself but one poem, *Off Duty*, "poignant," as one reviewer puts it "of Kingston's air guests." *Dunkirk* has a section of its own, so has *Raids and Ruins*, *Keeping the Seas* and *The Fallen*, to mention only two or three. But the longest and most thought-provoking of the thirty-three groupings is *Reflexions*, recording, in the words of the editor, "the

thoughts of old men in their libraries, of young men in their camps, of all men who reflect even while they resist, endure, attack."

However, it appears to certain of his readers—among them this reviewer—who would be amateurs, but who confess to be no adepts in art-work or art-criticism, that Dr. Clarke has yielded too large a place to "Modernism." Are not some of the poems in the *Treasury* deficient in clarity, thought, inspiration or imagination when compared with the traditional models? On this score Dr. Clarke, in a letter to the present writer, has this to say: "I have tried to include in the present volume poems which, however various in merit, seem to represent artistic sincerity." He agrees that among contemporary poets there is a disposition "to depart from sound tradition with the somewhat ambiguous hope that something new and desirable may be discovered by and through 'Modernism'." But he asserts that experiment is equal in importance with tradition in the life history of any art. He adds, however, the qualifying words: "but experiment and innovation are of little use unless one *knows* the tradition of the past. No philosophy of literature seems adequate to me which fails to reckon with its continuity." To the reproach of the amateurish critic that the poems are unequal, Dr. Clarke replies that poetry is constituted by five ingredients, the principal of which is thought or intellect. But in no one poet can we find an exact balancing of all five, the other four being music, imagination, emotion and invention. "Accordingly," he adds, "we think of some poets as primarily musical, others as primarily emotional or lyrical and still others as primarily intellectual."

In short, the *Treasury* is a representative collection of the poetry and wisdom of the day.

S. L. WARE.

BOOKS RECEIVED

NEW VIEWPOINTS IN GEORGIA HISTORY. Albert B. Saye. The University of Georgia Press. Price \$2.50.

LEADERS OF THE CANADIAN CHURCH. Edited by Canon Bertal Heeney. Foreword by Dr. H. J. Cody. Bruce Humphries, Inc. Price \$3.00.

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF THE HONOURABLE ROBERT BOYLE. Louis Trenchard More. Oxford University Press. Price \$4.50.

BOWSTRINGS. David Cheney. Bruce Humphries, Inc. Price \$2.50.

OF LITTLE PEOPLE. John McSliley Boyd. Manthorne and Burack. Price \$1.75.

SWING THE BIG-EYED RABBIT. John Pleasant McCoy. E. P. Dutton and Co. Price \$2.50.

SELECTED POEMS. Robert Penn Warren. Harcourt, Brace and Co. Price \$2.50.

TAPS FOR PRIVATE TUSSIE. Jesse Stuart. E. P. Dutton and Co. Price \$2.50.

STUDIES IN ENGLISH 1943. The University of Texas Press.

CONTEMPORARY POETRY. Two issues. Price \$40.

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE MODERN WORLD. Arnold S. Nash. The Macmillan Company. Price \$2.50.

DISCOVERING THE BOY OF NAZARETH. Winifred Kirkland. The Macmillan Company. Price \$1.25.

by Theodore Spencer

THE ISOLATION OF THE SHAKESPEAREAN HERO¹

I

ONE of the dangers that faces any student of so universal a writer as Shakespeare is that a single aspect of his work may be emphasized to the exclusion of everything else, and be seen as the only key to an understanding of him. The student who emphasizes his mastery of character can only too easily forget his mastery of construction; the student who emphasizes his imagery can only too easily forget his mastery of character. Worst of all, the student who traces an idea, or a theme, throughout Shakespeare's work, can too easily forget that Shakespeare was a practical playwright, not a mere moralist or teacher, and that when he describes a particular human situation or relates it to general values, he is doing so in order to write an interesting play. There is no one key which can explain Shakespeare's universally imaginative mind.

And yet the universally imaginative mind, the mind of "negative capability," to use Keats' phrase, is bound, by its very nature, to express certain fundamental human truths and to embody and define, better than any other sort of mind, recurrently universal situations. And we are therefore justified in finding—in such minds—what we ourselves believe to be generally or universally true. Shakespeare can justly mean different things to different generations, and what a given generation sees in him can, inversely, be seen as a description and even a judgment of that generation. A writer like Shakespeare always says more than his conscious mind has planned, and readers of a later generation, provided they keep their sense of historical per-

¹The Furness Lecture at Wellesley College for 1944.

spective keen, have a right to see, in so wise an imagination, a reflection of their own most intimate concerns. What is *there*, in great works of art, is there as much because of the observer as because of the creator.

I make these cautionary remarks because the theme of isolation which I want to explore in Shakespeare's work is a theme which is, at the present time, vibrating in many sensitive minds, and I do not want to give the impression that because it is something we are particularly aware of ourselves, I consider it the single explanation of Shakespeare's view of life: it obviously is not. And it may seem odd to say that the theme of isolation is one that people are particularly conscious of today, regardless of whether or not it is to be found in Shakespeare. The movies, the radio, all the enormous expansion of facilities for communication—these apparently do not isolate people; on the contrary they bring them together; human beings are surely closer, at least within their own social groups, than they have ever been before.

But no psychologist, certainly no psychiatrist, would say so. On the contrary, the mass communication which is the chief phenomenon and probably the chief curse of our civilization has made the individual not only more isolated, inside, than he has usually been, but also more scared of isolation, more afraid of loneliness, than seems to have been true in other periods of history. The circumstances of life eventually force all human beings to recognize their loneliness; the rapid and shallow flood of emotions in which we at present live gives us no time to prepare for being alone, and apparently there are few outlets which can give a man that sense of sharing his essential being which is one of the foundations of happiness.

There is, however, nothing necessarily tragic about this situation, even though it may swell the practice of psychiatrists and over-crowd the mental hospitals. It depends on how we look at it as to whether we consider it tragic or not. For the sense of isolation is one of the chief symptoms of growth; it is a sign of development, not only in adolescence, but throughout all further stages of mental and emotional change. To feel queer, to

outgrow previous varieties of usualness, suddenly to feel the absurdity of being merely part of a banking system or of the class of 1958, is the mark of a valuable human character. To outgrow that growth, to pass through the suffering and challenging period of isolation, to find at the end of the tunnel a new company, is to be a member of the elect. And it seems to me that this picture of isolation, the suffering which it involves, and the size and growth of soul which it indicates, is one of the things that Shakespeare shows us in his tragedies.

II

One of Shakespeare's earliest dramatic uses of the sense of isolation occurs in *Romeo and Juliet*. Both the hero and the heroine develop in the course of the play, but as far as their relation to their environment is concerned, they develop in opposite ways. When the play begins Romeo is shown as cut off from his friends and family by an adolescent and dreamy romanticism. He, like Benvolio, who describes him, is "one too many by [his] weary self"; dreaming of Rosaline, he wanders alone at dawn among the sycamores, and when the sun rises he locks himself up alone in his room. But his love for Juliet changes all this nonsense, and after he has planned to marry her he becomes sociable once more, to the delight of Mercutio: "Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo." His love has made him an adult, and he no longer finds it necessary to create a mock solitude.

Juliet becomes an adult, however, by being forced into an isolation that is not a mockery at all, but is pathetically serious. At the beginning of the play she is very much in the bosom of her family, fussily protected by her father, her mother and her nurse. But when she marries Romeo she has a secret that cuts her off from her father and mother, who try very harshly to make her marry Paris, and even the nurse abandons her when Romeo is banished. Juliet—except for Friar Laurence—is left alone. "Go, counsellor," she says of the nurse, after the nurse has left the stage:

... Go, counsellor;
Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain.
I'll to the friar, to know his remedy:
If all else fail, myself have power to die.

Her love, which has discovered her to herself (this is what I mean by saying that she becomes an adult), has cut her off from everything she has previously depended on; the discovery of herself, the realization of herself, has turned her environment from a friend to an enemy, and tragedy is the result.

All drama, of course, is a series of discoveries, and the discovery by a tragic hero of his separateness from the world in which he moves is very frequently an important element in great tragic situations. It is part of the tragedy of *Antigone*, as it is, in a lesser way, of the tragedy of Nora, in Ibsen's *Doll's House*. But nowhere is it so consistently an essential part of the tragic situation as in the series of Shakespearean tragedies that begins with *Hamlet*. In fact, if we take an over-simplified view of those tragedies—a view which Shakespeare himself never took—we could see them all as studies, from various points of view, in isolation and loneliness. *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Timon*, *Coriolanus*, as well as other characters in the plays of which they are the central figures, all suffer because they find themselves in solitary places, and, because those solitary places are in the soul, we feel their greatness of character. Something much deeper happens to these characters than happens to Juliet. Here is a tragedy of circumstance, but though circumstance, in the later tragedies, may produce the discovery of isolation, it is secondary to the mental and emotional awareness of that discovery which each hero, in his different way, grows into. The over-simplified view of those plays may even see them all fitting into the same formula: at the beginning, though *Hamlet* is perhaps an exception, each character is at home in his surroundings—*Othello* is a trusted general, *Macbeth* a successful soldier, *Lear* an authoritative king, *Timon* a generous host, *Coriolanus* a triumphant fighter. But as each play develops, an ever-widening, split between the hero and his environment occurs, and, to change the image, his en-

vironment falls away from him, so that he stands out, alone and jagged, either, morally speaking, above his environment, as in *Hamlet*, or beneath it, as in *Macbeth*, or, as in *Timon*, apart from it altogether.

Hamlet, as I have said, is to some extent an exception. This is because it is the only Shakespearean tragedy which begins, in classical fashion, *in medias res*. If Shakespeare had here followed the usual Elizabethan tradition, as he does in the other tragedies, and started with the beginning of the story, the opening scene would have shown us the Danish court before old Hamlet's death, with young Hamlet, either present or at Wittenberg, a lively and happily-adjusted Renaissance prince. In fact we do, in retrospect, see him as such, for Ophelia's description of him after the nunnery scene is a deliberate contrast to the estranged being he has become:

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observ'd of all observers.

But as Shakespeare wrote the play, Hamlet is a solitary from the beginning; his separation into suffering has already occurred. Shakespeare does everything he can to make this as clear as possible; we must imagine the scene on the stage of the Globe in order to capture the full effect. The second scene, when we see Hamlet for the first time, was obviously made as brilliant as possible. It is the new king's first full-dress appearance, and everybody is splendidly dressed in bright colors—blue, scarlet, white and gold; Elizabethan theater companies, like their audiences, spent a lot of money on clothes. (Modern producers do not use enough *white* in their costumes). Against all this bright glory, made particularly dazzling in order to wipe out the memory of the king so recently dead, stands Hamlet, in black from head to foot. He does not speak for sixty-four lines, but during all the time the king and the others are talking, the eye of the spectator is caught by the solitary black exception to the general

brilliance; Hamlet's isolation is vividly evident at once. And as soon as he speaks we know that this external impression of separateness is nothing in comparison to Hamlet's inner emotions:

... I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

What this is we learn as soon as he is left alone, and the climax to this first tortured soliloquy is that he can tell no one about his trouble:

But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

His isolation is intensified by the interview with his father's ghost. Previously his isolated suffering, though it had turned his world upside down, had been passive, now with more knowledge comes more responsibility, and he must do more than passively suffer; he must act:

The time is out of joint; O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!

A good actor, speaking these lines (as Gielgud spoke them), should give his audience the feeling that Hamlet has at this point grown into a new dimension, has become, in a way very different from Juliet's, an adult. But he has become so with reluctance, with an increased consciousness of himself, and of his solitude in his responsibility. Hamlet's growth, his consciousness of loneliness, happens against his will, he accepts it laggingly or with wrenches to his soul. For the next we hear of him, after his reaction to the interview with the Ghost, is that he has abandoned Ophelia; circumstances have forced him into further isolation, and he, with his over-acute conscience, forces himself to create circumstance; he discards the girl he loves, not necessarily because he considers her too weak to share with him the burden of his knowledge and responsibility, but because he feels that he must do what he has to do by himself.

Hamlet's sense of his own isolation, as Shakespeare presents it, is by no means a simple thing. Hamlet has to cast off his

mother, for she has violated all his sense of what is right; he has to cast off Ophelia, for no one he loves can share his load; he casts off Rosencrantz and Guildenstern because he has outgrown them. In a sense he reaches his emotional climax when, at the end of the second act, he takes pleasure (as he does in all his soliloquies) in being alone; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the spying representatives of the conventional world which he has outgrown because he has seen through its corruption, have at last left him, and he can finally unpack his heart: "Now I am alone," he says, and he bursts into a torrent of self-reproach, which is at the same time an emotional release, and which at last ends in a plan for action: the play which will catch the conscience of the king.

I call this soliloquy an emotional climax because after it, in spite of the terrible wrenching of the nunnery scene, Hamlet has Horatio as his confidant, and because he begins, for the first time, to have a feeling of control over events. The play is a remarkable success; it tells him all he wants to know about the king's guilt, and he gets a new sense of power in his manipulation of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and of Polonius immediately afterwards: he is, and we feel that he knows it in his own mind, superior to them as he has not been before; he plays with them more authoritatively, as if they were puppets, though they can still make him angry. And we must not forget this, to his *new* sense of superiority when we interpret his refusal to kill the king at his prayers. He wants to do a complete job of revenge; he has had a triumphant success with the play, and he delays, not as most people think, from a feeling of insecurity and weakness, but from a feeling that is quite the reverse: a feeling of superiority and strength. He now knows the king to be in his power at *any* time: events have proved that his isolation is a source of power; why should he kill the king at a moment so auspicious for the king's eventual salvation? Better to do it

When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed,
At gaming, swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't.

It is Hamlet's sense of power—a wonderful new thing for him—that makes him decide to wait.

We feel the same sense of power in the closet scene; Hamlet is no longer meditating by himself about his mother's lust: he is actually confronting her with it; he has developed the capacity for action, even if it is only action through words. But after that his intellectual inclination to passivity, which is still fundamental to his character, as it is to all people who are too self-conscious, takes hold of him again; he allows himself to be transported to England with only one violent flash of self-recognition and self-despair, expressed in the soliloquy that begins:

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge!

When he returns to Denmark, Hamlet is another man; he has changed enormously since the beginning of the play. He is no longer isolated; as far as external companionship is concerned, he has Horatio constantly with him, and he has, as a preparation for his death, become resigned to whatever may happen. He has lost the rebelliousness that was given him by his original isolation; his pulsating awareness of his own suffering important individuality has stopped beating, and he can meditate on death, standing above his world. His view of life is now the sad view of Stoicism, the wisdom of all passion spent: "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all." After this inner submission, Hamlet's physical death seems inevitable.

Hamlet is not the only isolated figure in the play; there is also Ophelia. Her situation, or rather one aspect of her situation, has been well described by J. B. Yeats, in a letter to his famous son:

Ophelia is all phantasy . . . [her] phantasy in genuine and makes her a solitary (she remembers the people only because of her natural kindness and gentle breeding), and therefore out of everyone's reach. She is forever talking of her father, yet the name only floats on the surface of her phantasy, for she is incapable of her distress . . . by her loneliness

she reaches the highest altitude of beauty and loveliness. She no longer suffers, that is past. Why a loneliness unattended by pain should melt every heart with pity, I cannot explain—I cannot even guess.²

But Ophelia's isolation from her environment, caused by the loss of her lover and the death of her father, is of course a very different thing from the isolation of Hamlet; as Yeats says it puts her into a phantastic world, whereas Hamlet's consciousness of his separateness plunges him into a world that is tragically and terribly real.

III

In *Othello* the theme of isolation appears very obviously on the surface, and less obviously in the deeper reaches of meaning that the play contains. Othello is set off from his Venetian environment at the beginning by characteristics that as yet have no destructive emotional power. He is black, he is a stranger, he is ignorant of Venetian customs. Yet he has within him a rich source of pride. The first thing he tells us about himself is that he is of royal blood:

... 'Tis yet to know,—
Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,
I shall promulgate—I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege, and my demerits
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reach'd.

And we see by his actions that he is set off by his self-controlled grandeur and assurance from a machinating manipulator like Iago, and the general buzz and fuss that surrounds him: he is obviously a superior man. Furthermore he has had a very special and remarkable career; there is magic in his background, and he has had adventures in most uncommon places and has seen strange things.

But none of all this, at the beginning of the play, gives him any feeling of isolation: on the contrary he feels highly satisfied,

²I. B. Yeats. *Letters*, ed. Joseph Hone, London, 1944, p. 242.

and having crowned his magical career with a final miracle, the winning of Desdemona's love, he is apparently in complete mastery of his environment. Yet the differences between him and his environment are used by Iago to bring about his downfall, they form the tool with which Iago so cunningly destroys him. Iago, playing on Othello's ignorance tells Othello about Venetian women:

I know our country disposition well;
In Venice they do let Heaven see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands.

His next move is to emphasize that unnaturalness of Desdemona's taste in choosing for her husband someone so unlike what she is familiar with:

Not to affect many proposed matches
Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
Whereto we see in all things nature tends.

In other words he makes Othello distrust the very thing which previously had seemed most wonderful, and its very remarkable-ness is what makes it now seem suspicious.

There is, of course, much more than a sense of separateness or isolation in Othello's tragedy, and a simple passionate man like him does not feel evil so metaphysically as a man like Hamlet. But his separation from the thing he loves through his tragic misunderstanding is nevertheless an important element in his emotional destruction, and part of his torture, when he finally discovers the truth, is that the separation will last forever:

... O ill-starr'd wench!
Pale as thy smock! When we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it.

At the very end of the play, however, Othello does try to recapture some of his lost self-esteem by remembering an episode out of his wonderful past which illustrates his fidelity to his environment. He calls Ludovico's attention to his service to the

Venetian state, and tells how he defended the state in Aleppo once against a Turk who insulted it. But the only service he can do now is to do to himself what he had then done to the Turk:

I took by th' throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him—thus.

The act, however tragic, does restore him to some extent to his environment, making him a part of it again, though it also, as an act of suicide, is the climax of his isolation. The parallel and contrast to *Hamlet* is worth noticing. Hamlet, the philosophical man, becomes reconciled to his world with a change of *mind*; he accepts the fate that he feels is coming with stoical resignation: "the readiness is all." But Othello's reconciliation, as is appropriate for a man of action, occurs not through thought, but through the recollection of a deed. In neither case, of course, is the reconciliation at all complete; after what each hero has been through, the restoration of their earlier adjustment is impossible; yet each of them does regain, however slightly, some sense of belonging again to their very different worlds, one of thought, one of action, before he is destroyed.

Iago, from one point of view, might also be seen as an isolated figure, though not—as far as Shakespeare's intention is concerned—as a tragic one. To Shakespeare tragedy only occurs when there is great emotion, and Iago is not emotional; in the tragic connotations of the word, he is not isolated. He is, instead, an intense individualist—like Richard III and Edmund—which is a very different thing; he is not a man whom circumstances beyond his control have forced into a suffering self-recognition of separateness; on the contrary he is alone because he wants to be, he enjoys it; selfishness is his ideal: "I have look'd upon the world for four times seven years; and since I could distinguish between a benefit and an injury, I never found man that knew how to love himself." He is always self-possessed, and certain modern critics who think of him as having a tragic side to his character, obviously misinterpret Shakespeare's view of him. He is, of course, a failure, but he is not a tragic failure.

IV

The isolating of King Lear from everything that has previously solaced and surrounded him is so obviously an essential a part of the play that I need do little more than call attention to it. When the play begins Lear has everything; by the middle of the play, everything is lost: his kingdom, his daughters, and even his mind. Here again we must see the play on the stage if we are to grasp the full contrast which Shakespeare intended. The first scene, like the court-room scene in *Hamlet*, should be as splendid as possible. First we hear the sound of a trumpet, the set of notes called a "sennet" which an Elizabethan audience would automatically associate with royalty. Then "enter one bearing a coronet:" the sound associated with royalty is immediately followed by the visual symbol of royalty. The stage directions are precise as to the order of entrance of the main characters; "then King Lear, then the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall, next Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, with followers." It is a stately and carefully planned procession, and the "followers" were no doubt as numerous as the resources of the Globe made possible. Lear is the central figure in a crowded scene (Gloucester, Kent and Edmund are already on the stage), every member of which is dependent on him. We should have a clear recollection of all this style and splendor when we come to the third act, for Shakespeare is always aiming at contrasts, and his contrasts in visual impressions are planned to reinforce his deeper contrasts of character, tone, situation and theme. Again the meager stage direction should be carefully observed: "Storm still. Enter Kent and a Gentleman, severally." The wild sound of the storm is in sharp contrast to the earlier authority of the trumpet, and the visual impression of Kent and the Gentlemen entering separately from opposite sides of the stage, meeting at random and by chance, makes a sharp contrast to the controlled group order of the opening scene of the play. And when these two individuals go out, again separately, Lear enters, accompanied only by the Fool.

Lear, cut off, largely by his own folly, from all that has sup-

ported his ego, no longer in control of anything, has only one desire: he wants everything destroyed:

... And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
That make ingrateful man!

Proud, spoilt and imperious as he is, Lear's response to his isolation is very different from that of Hamlet and Othello. Accustomed all his life to giving orders, when he finds himself impotent through his own foolishness, he can demand, with violent futility, the elements to produce universal destruction. But this is not his only response. Near the beginning of the play, at the close of the first scene, Regan tells us that he "hath ever but slenderly known himself." Though suffering, through isolation, he does begin to know himself; for the first time he thinks of the sufferings of other people, and he wants for the first time to *share*!

... Where is this straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel,
Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.

Before he goes mad, however, he has one more discovery to make about humanity. Looking at Edgar disguised as a madman, he exclaims:

Ha! Here's three on's are sophisticated! Thou art the thing
itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor,
bare, foked animal as thou art. Off, off, yon lendings! Come,
unbutton here.

And as we hear these words, and watch Lear tearing at his clothes, we should again recall for contrast the external magnificence and pomp of the opening scene of the play. Lear has descended to the bottom.

His purgation, however, is a long one, and the violence of his destructive mood crops out again with passion in the course of

his madness, the madness which has cut him off from humanity. When he recovers he sees himself at last as he is:

I am a very foolish, fond old man,
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less.

And his isolation finds solace at last in the love of Cordelia. That is why her death is so strong a blow to the audience whose sympathies Shakespeare has worked on so powerfully; her death is almost more than we can bear, even though Lear himself, at the very end, believes she is still alive.

V

Macbeth is perhaps the most conscious study in evil of all Shakespeare's tragedies, and, of the great tragedies, it is the only one in which the hero finds no palliating circumstances to compensate for his separation from his world. Macbeth's growth into evil is an implacable progress into isolation. At the beginning of the play he is approved by everybody; he has bought, as he tells us himself, "Golden opinions from all sorts of people," and has a wife with whom he shares everything. But having committed, with fear and trembling, his first crime, he develops a desperate individualism which makes him firmer and harder and less and less dependent on other people as the play goes on. He is increasingly isolated from goodness. Goodness enables people to communicate and share; evil makes sharing impossible, and hell is the place of isolated souls. Dante's *Inferno* is only a partially true picture of what hell can be, for his scheme of punishment has at least one consolation in that the misery he presents has the satisfaction of company; his sinners live forever with countless other sinners in the same eternal predicament. But the true terror of sin is its loneliness, and one of the fearful things about a man's progress into evil, is that he has to keep his plans and his motives secret: secrecy is his only practical policy. Therefore, once Macbeth has taken his first step into evil, urged on by his wife, he can discard her assistance for the next step. He kills Banquo without telling her of his plans. As

we watch Macbeth moving from one crime to another, we feel as if we were watching a man walling himself up, and at the same time assuming that the wall is himself, that the implacable stones are capable of movement, when they are, in reality, the petrification of fate—a fate which still leaves a desperate awareness locked inside, though it is an awareness that can know only dust.

All this is made very explicit by Shakespeare at the end of the play. Macbeth's response to the death of his wife, with whom he had shared the beginning of his desperate enterprise into evil, is the final indication of his petrification: by this time she can mean nothing to him,

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.

He has already "lived long enough"; his isolation has become complete:

... my way of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have.

Macbeth can die only in desperation.

VI

Timon of Athens was probably sketched out—it is no more than a sketch—just after Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*. It is an unsatisfactory play all round, and if we look in it for a treatment of the theme of isolation, we remain as dissatisfied in this regard as we do in every other. The play is too violent. It differs from the other tragedies in that there is no adequate development of the main character; the theme is not a part of the living texture

of a human being; it exists for its own sake and is treated like a thesis. Timon's friends, when he has lost all his money, abandon him, and he, in revenge, curses all mankind and determines to live alone in the woods, like an animal. But we cannot sympathize with his deliberate, embittered isolation, as we can sympathize, in spite of everything, with the isolation of Macbeth. Lear may wish universal destruction, and we can understand why he does so, for Shakespeare has shown us very poignantly how his feeling for natural love has been injured by the cruelty of Goneril and Regan, and the apparent cruelty of Cordelia—people very close to him. But the society of which Timon is at first a part is not a family society—it is an artificial one, of flatterers and hypocrites; Timon's disillusionment is a nervous and intellectual disillusionment, and when he cries, "Destruction fang mankind!" we listen to him coldly, as we never listen to Lear. His is a special case, and we do not feel that what is happening to him could ever happen to us. Timon's isolation is intellectually self-created; though circumstances, combined with his own fatuousness, have brought it about, it is not inevitable: he could have answered circumstances in a different way. His reaction is not made to seem inevitable; he is merely *farouche*—not grand. When he dies we say, "well, *that's* over"—we do not have to dry our eyes. Shakespeare wrote *Timon* with his nerves, not with his whole consciousness and his heart. Probably his recognition of this fact explains why he never completed his first rough draft. His ability to express the passion of isolation was perhaps fading out.

Shakespeare wrote only two more tragedies, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, and though these are very different from each other, they are also very different from the group of tragedies which precede them, at least in their handling of the theme which is the subject of our present discussion. In the first of them the theme is hardly present at all; Antony loses his world for the sake of Cleopatra, but the world he loses is a public world not a private one, and though his love may destroy his power, his glory and even his life, it does not destroy his soul. He is never

forced into the disastrous or purgative loneliness of Macbeth or Lear.

In *Coriolanus*, however, the theme of isolation may legitimately be found. Coriolanus' aristocratic pride, the pride of a school-boy who has been trained to be a physical hero, the pride that scorns the people who cannot wield a sword as well as he can, the pride of an ambitious man who scorns the means by which he must achieve his ambition—all this forces him into an *impasse* which makes his destruction inevitable. Coriolanus is isolated from the citizens, to begin with, and as Shakespeare describes the citizens, we feel he is right to be so isolated. But his scorn of them, his lack of recognition of their possible influence on him, produce his downfall. They turn on him, and he seeks refuge with his old enemy, Aufidius the Volscian, with whom he has at least the comradeship of military rivalry. Consequently he is cut off from his own group of aristocrats, and he is forced into a position where his loyalty to himself is hopelessly lost between his loyalty to his early patrician and matriarchial ties and his loyalty—a phoney and opportunistic loyalty—to the enemies of his country. The situation is, of course, impossible, and his march on Rome at the head of Rome's enemies, is doomed to defeat because of his earlier ties. Doubly a betrayer, he must eventually be killed.

Yet Coriolanus, who is in one way forced to be alone almost more than any other Shakespearean hero, does not move us as Hamlet, Othello, Lear and Macbeth move us. The play of which he is the center, admirably constructed as it is, has never been popular and the reason is that Coriolanus's character is a tight one; he is a narrower, a less poetic, figure than Shakespeare's other heroes, and his political isolation is therefore more striking than his emotional or spiritual isolation. When the play of *Coriolanus* arouses passions, as it did in Paris in 1934, it arouses political passions, and though that fact may prove that the play has dramatic vitality, it also proves that its vitality is accidental to the fundamental concerns of the individual members of the audience. *Coriolanus* is a thoroughly admirable play, and it may

be studied with great profit, it is a masterpiece of technique, like the later paintings of Mantegna, but like those paintings, it is cold inside. At this stage in his career, Shakespeare was no longer interested in describing the passion of interior isolation. Perhaps he could no longer bear to contemplate it with sufficient intensity to portray it.

VII

Shakespeare's last plays—*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *A Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*—are less easy to classify as a group than Shakespearean critics, myself included, have tried to suppose. Of three of them, Shakespeare wrote less than half, and the other three, *Cymbeline*, *A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, are not as like one another as convenience would prefer. It can, however, be said of the first two that if the theme of isolation occurs in them, it is only in a minor way, and that when it does occur it is almost invariably offset by a flood of reconciliation. The distress of Imogen and the jealousy of Leontes are based on completely false premises, and though each of them may seem to be, for a time, abandoned by circumstance, the abandonment is not eventually serious, and what is emphasized is the happy reunion at the end. The situation is the reverse of that in the tragedies.

This is even more clear in *The Tempest*. Here the action begins with isolation and ends in harmony; it is the situation of *Macbeth* turned inside out. The isolation is not a painful one, to be sure, but it is isolation none the less; Prospero and Miranda have been separated for twelve years from their rightful possessions, and though their life on the island has been happy enough, Prospero still feels bitterly about the evil brother who sent him there. And the people on the ship are also separated to some extent from one another, scattered by the wreck. But as the play progresses we see nearly all the characters moving away from isolation to unity. Ferdinand finds Miranda, Caliban finally obeys Prospero's commands willingly, Ariel is released into the element of air where he belongs, most of the evil characters, after

a period of purgation in which their reason is taken temporarily away from them, repent of their behavior, and—most important of all—Prospero throws away his magical properties and once more becomes Duke of Milan—a man again, no longer a magician, reunited with his kind.

There is one exception to this general reconciliation at the end of *The Tempest*, and that is Antonio. Mr. W. H. Auden has recently written a series of poems about the state of mind of the characters in the play after they leave the island, and are on ship-board going home. Each one has found himself, as Auden describes them, and each one sees himself as a part of something or in relation to something but after each character has spoken, there is an ironic jeering refrain by Antonio:

One crown is lacking, Prospero,
My empire is my own;
Dying Alonso does not know
The diadem Antonio
Wears in his world alone.

In Auden's poem this refrain, varied according to the character who has previously spoken but always emphasizing Antonio's loneliness, is very effective, and I believe that it justly interprets the impression we have at the end of Shakespeare's play, though it may somewhat exaggerate it.

For in *The Tempest* Shakespeare is not, in spite of the glow of reconciliation diffused throughout, giving us his version of a *Paradiso*. Though some of the characters change for the better, not all of them do; if they did Shakespeare would not be presenting a true picture of human beings. In human society there is always an Antonio, unregenerate and alone.

by Herbert Marshall McLuhan

KIPLING AND FORSTER

The work of art stands by itself, and nothing else does. It achieves something which has always been promised by society but always delusively. Ancient Athens made a mess—but the Antigone stands up.

THE familiar and facile dichotomizing of this recent pronouncement of Forster's is a comment on his non-productivity since 1924. The glib assumption that art and life stand apart, and that either one is a substitute for the other, suggests a reversible, inversible mechanism of mentality not at all friendly to artistic production. The themes of his early novels had seemingly reached their utmost orchestration in *Howards End* in 1910. However, a more intense realization of the same themes became possible after the impact of Egypt and India on his sensibility. Perhaps his experience, after all, was not much modified by this. But India does seem to have offered a new *point d'appui* for a final effort. In fact, India was a ready-made fulcrum for Forster. Here the public school code flourishes unchallenged by any more civilized variants. The Wilcoxes of *Howards End* rule India, and India turns on them a pitiless critical gaze such as the Schlegels of Bloomsbury could never have done. This leaves Forster free to explore the picturesquely unintelligible vistas of the Eastern scene. That is why *A Passage to India* is so immeasurably better than anything else by Forster. For the same reason, it can never be duplicated.

The "two world" view such as that offered by British India is especially useful to the artist who cannot localize or understand his dissatisfactions nor overcome the dualism of his experience. Santayana pointed out that Henry James overcame the crude split and limitations of the genteel tradition in the classic way—

by understanding them. But the dichotomies of Forster's world are never understood by Forster and so never overcome. Before approaching Forster's world it will be helpful to consider briefly the analogous case of Kipling.

Kipling's best work was done in India or in the early years while his Indian experience was a main resource of his writing. To take only the *Plain Tales From the Hills*, it is easy to see that Kipling is amphibiously living in divided and distinguished worlds. Many of his best effects are the result of insight into native life. All his ironies directed at the governors of India spring from sympathy with the entire reasonableness of the Indian: "A native's life in India implies the life of his son. Wherefore, you cannot legislate for one generation at a time. You must consider the next from the native point of view. Curiously enough, the native now and then, and in Northern India more particularly, hates being protected against himself."

It is easy to find such passages (and they are integral to the tales) but it is even easier to find the passages of crude irony in which the seasoned Anglo-Indian pours scorn over the green-horn from "home". "Let a puppy eat the soap in the bathroom or chew a newly-blacked boot. . . . Any old dog about the house will soon show him the unwisdom of biting big dogs' ears." One hears the emphatic tones of the veteran warning of the need for a sense of proportion: "Now India is a place beyond all others where one must not take things too seriously—the mid-day sun always expected." An example of the impractical theorist is McGoggin: "He was clever—brilliantly clever—but his cleverness worked the wrong way. Instead of keeping to the study of the vernaculars, he had read some books written by a man called Comte, I think, and a man called Spencer. You will find these books in the Library. They deal with people's insides from the point of view of men who have not stomachs. There was no order against his reading them; but his Mamma should have smacked him."

In the coarse gritty soil of such a sensibility as this it is strange to think that Henry James should have looked for an

English Balzac to flourish. The main thing to note, however, is that the crude arrogance and cock-sureness of this sort of thing is the result of the two-world view of Kipling. We have seen the Kipling who can tweak the official nose of India, who can sympathize with the reasonableness of the native outlook, and who can sneer at India as a paradise for the English middle-class. He sees clearly that much of the grotesqueness of the English society in India is owing to the fact that "every one knows every one else far too well for business purposes. How on earth can you rack and harry and post a man for his losings, when you are fond of his wife, and live in the same Station with him?" This is the Kipling who looks at the English from the standpoint of the born Anglo-Indian. But there is another and more insistent side to Kipling the Anglo-Indian. Leading a sub-human existence of tense harshness, this Kipling girds at the members of a more gracious society. They are pampered, sheltered sissies who would perish in a week on the Indian frontier.

That, in a word, is the point. India is to England what the frontier has been to America. Whittled down by the grim life of endless action and vigilance, the complex code of Western society is distorted like a bust of Henry Moore's. It is Kipling the spokesman of frayed men who live always near the snapping point, who emerges from India. And in this early Kipling it is easy to find the facets which compelled the attention of Hemingway. (Hemingway says that Kipling taught him more than anybody.) For Hemingway, with one foot on the American frontier has also one foot in the post-war bohemia where people lived always at the breaking point. The agonized gestures of the frontier suddenly became a suitable vehicle for the distortions of suburbia; just as the rebellious aristocrat, the Byronic dandy, became the model at once for the artist and the sleuth or man-hunter.

It is worth noting the characteristics of the Kipling hero since he has modelled for Bulldog Drummond, Lawrence of Arabia, and the "dumb-ox" hero of Hemingway. Kipling's Strickland is

T. E. Lawrence to the life. He is a man of mystery having great power over the natives. He lives a dual life. Yet his fellow officials "trusted Strickland as men trust quiet men." And by a "man" Kipling means "a sound practical man" who "could combine the frivolities of ordinary life with his work and yet do well." Such a man was Reggie Burke who "rode anything that would let him get up, danced as neatly as he rode, and was wanted for every sort of amusement in the Station." How unlike his colleague Riley who "like most clever self-made men had much simplicity in his nature." The simple Riley is, of course, the villain of the piece. The sly Reggie is the hero. Riley could "never get over Reggie's look of youth and 'you-be-damned' air; and he couldn't understand Reggie's friends—clean-built, careless men in the Army—who rode over to big Sunday breakfasts at the Bank, and told sultry stories till Riley got up and left the room." Another villain is Bronckhurst, who "had no respect for the pretty public and private lies that make life a little less nasty than it is." In that last phrase one sees the pathological seething for which "a man's man" and "a good-mixer," etc. are the universal facade. The cad is the man who blows the bloody gaff, or who lets the lecherous or usurious cat out of the bag. In America he is the "knocker", the man who terrifies his fellows by reminding them of abysmal evasions and insecurity.

How does the Kipling hero regard women? One finds the same harsh dichotomies, the same violent cleavages which provide the pathology of melodrama. They are demons or angels, but totally incomprehensible, of course: "Men are quite blind in the matters unless they have more of the woman than the man in their composition, in which case it does not matter what they say or think." This adolescent cliché provides many a characteristic gesture: "No man will ever know the exact truth of this story; though women may sometimes whisper it to one another after a dance, when they are putting up their hair for the night and comparing lists of victims." Again: "There were about twenty-three sides to that lady's character. Some men

say more." Naturally, since women are dangerous, Mona Lisaish beings, the rugged male must classify them according to their complexions and preserve an ironical attitude toward them: "She was good and very lovely—possessed what innocent people at Home call a 'Spanish' complexion, with thick blue-black hair growing low down on the forehead, into a "widow's peak", and big violet eyes under eyebrows as black and as straight as the borders of a *Gazette Extraordinary*, when a big man dies." The hero having escaped from this "impossible" lady will one day "marry a sweet pink-and-white maiden."

Women are not only "unfathomable," but they are "all alike." They are hopelessly impractical and dream of life through "a glorious golden mist." Some of them, however, have hearts of gold under a worldly exterior, like Mrs. Hauksbee. "She had the wisdom of the Serpent, the logical coherence of the Man, the fearlessness of the Child, and the triple intuition of the Woman." Again: "One could admire and respect Mrs. Hauksbee, despise and avoid Mrs. Reiver, but one was forced to adore the Venus Annodomini." The Venus Annodomini educates all the youngsters sent out to India. She is not amorous but motherly: "Too much zeal was a thing She did not approve of; preferring instead a tempered and sober tenderness."

This pretty well covers the gamut of postures of Kipling's men and women. A few eccentrics hover about them, of course. But nothing has been done here to exaggerate the spurious insights and the hard-bitten clichés which constitute the sensibility of the best Kipling—the early one. With the instruments at his disposal he was incapable of seeing anything or of facing anything. Throughout, Kipling is the advocate of the brittle husk which is the "masculine" Wilcox pattern of *Howards End*. Forster is almost committed to sponsoring the feeble Bloomsbury estheticism of the "feminine" Schlegel pattern. And yet, subject to the patina of Forster's Bloomsburyese and to his slightly superior detachment as esthetic observer of the social scene, it is noteworthy that both men regarded as insurmountable the contradictions and cleavages between art and action. Neither man penetrated his

data nor resolved his experience. And Forster takes the public school code almost as seriously as Kipling, even though he habitually deplores it. It never seems to occur to him that its blatant immaturity and distortions offer no field for the serious artist.

A good example of the artistic value of the two-world formula to Forster is his introduction of the Indians' rational and moral bewilderment at English agnostics daring to rule Indian mystics. Forster is able to utilize this fact dramatically without looking into the matter himself. Again, he represents the Indians as masters of gesture, of a life style unbroken by a head-heart dichotomy; and yet he has no thought of how such harmony might be transferred or recovered for Europe any more than he knows how it was won or lost. *A Passage to India* is greatly superior to *Howards End* because the Indians are a more convincing and complex incarnation of the "personal" point of view than the Schlegels; and Ronny and his fellow officials are more dramatically engaged in their milieu than the Wilcoxes. The Schlegels are vacuous beings beside the Indians, lacking any insight into art or the arts of life. They are as stupidly dull in their dealings with the world as the Wilcoxes. On the other hand, the Wilcoxes are devoid of interest because they don't believe in themselves, nor do they exercise conscious or unconscious power over their own lives. They are pathetic hulks self-consciously simulating Bulldog Drummond postures. Hemingway has succeeded to some degree in employing the Wilcox "masculinity" as the material of his art. But Forster has consistently avoided any scrutiny of this possibility. They are for him the ultimate stuff of history: "If Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died in England for thousands of years . . . there would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about in, no fields even."

Is it not possible, however, that an essential intellectual obtuseness lurks behind the dichotomizing habit of Forster's mind? In accepting as absolutes such well-worn *Clichés* as art *vs.* reality, spontaneity *vs.* caution, pedantry *vs.* experience, courage *vs.* respectability, highbrow and lowbrow, intelligence *vs.* stupidity,

hasn't Forster really swallowed his own world, making an act of faith of an unconsidered bolus? No artist is bound to accept his world as the material of his art in this way; but having done so he has no resource beyond a whimsical and ironical espousal now of one of the absolutes, now of another. Committed to all of them, he is condemned to make his characters act now in the mode of one, now of another, without himself being able to observe the action save from the point of view of yet another. It is thus that Forster's "sheep and goats" seen in one perspective merge and metamorphose themselves in another, with mock-profundity, suggesting that they are "symbols of some wider symbol," and that within the synthesis of some ultimate vision the good and the bad, the bright and the stupid, the alert and the seedy will each be seen to have contributed some indispensable ingredient to "the wider whole." And yet despite the ultimately theological co-ordinates of this "vision" Forster introduces God as a timid and resigned amnesiac, eager to reassure his creatures that if only they will carry on the show for a bit longer he is sure he will remember the plot.

That Forster as readily as Kipling is betrayed into some empty remark by his manner of accepting his ready-made world had best be illustrated before proceeding. In *A Passage to India* he says of Adela Quested: "Although her hard schoolmistressy manner remained, she was no longer examining life, but being examined by it; she had become a real person." The note of shrewd insight here is blown on a tin whistle. And yet the pseudo profundity of this statement has wide bearings. To be "examined by life" is a very schoolmistressy metaphor, even supposing that any significance can be attached to "life." It is plain that Forster is saying that the ethical earnestness and uplift and wilful estheticism of Adela have collapsed momentarily, and she has slipped into a rare moment of passion or receptivity. The husk of brittle purposes has been powdered revealing the "real person." That the real person is passionately there, we are simply told, because Forster cannot present a passionate being—one whose definition is not action or inaction but a mode of feel-

ing, as with the best of D. H. Lawrence's characters. Forster's world is rigid with purposes, with ethics. Nothing, however, is more purposive about his work than its preaching the abolition of mere purpose. It is thus that his novels import the impression of being mildly admonitory tracts for the times.

Another point at which Forster's world hangs suspended occurs apropos of Mrs. Moore's vision in the same novel: She had come to that state where the horror of the universe and its smallness are both visible at the same time—the twilight of the double vision in which so many elderly people are involved. If this world is not to our taste, well, at all events there is Heaven, Hell, Annihilation—one or other of those large things, that huge scenic background of stars, fires, blue or black air. All heroic endeavor, and all that is known as art, assumes that there is such a background, just as all practical endeavor, when the world is to our taste, assumes that the world is all. But in the twilight of the double vision, a spiritual muddledom is set up for which no high-sounding words can be found: we can neither act nor refrain from action, we can neither ignore nor respect Infinity."

The nostalgic agnosticism of this familiar view of "values" as wishful fictions is not improved by the solemnly arch addition: "Visions are supposed to entail profundity, but—wait till you get one, dear reader!" One is no further ahead by reflecting that this passage may seem to be watery journalese simply because it is out of its context. That is just another way of saying that the context has drugged us into inattention. The "double vision" here made dependent on glandular and somatic decline is admittedly the vision of all Forster's novels. It is the vision of action *vs.* feeling, England *vs.* India, youth *vs.* age. The little world is "to the taste" of the vigorous and eupeptic. Hence they act. To the dyspeptic and the middle-aged the impossibility of directed action is wistfully compensated for, now by the pseudo-horrors of Heaven, Hell, and Annihilation, which lend equal significance to action and inaction, and now by the vision of the smallness of the world which renders everything insignificant. It is like a wistful page from the "As If" philosophy of Vaihinger.

Time and again Forster pauses dramatically as if he were about to draw the obvious conclusion from his postulates—that action, although an illusion, is after all the *sine qua non* and that reflection, detachment, and art are more basically delusive, representing an excrescence, an abortion, such as metaphysics is for the pragmatist. Caught, however, within the circle of his postulates, Forster only concludes that none of them is adequate, that everything is a substitute for something else. Historical reality is a mess which could ideally have become a work of art. Art is a fraudulent evasion of the mess of history and society and is yet more real because more satisfying than they. This is dangerously close to shamming. Why take so much trouble to pronounce over society and art the same verdict which a banal society has already pronounced, and with which, as artist, Mr. Forster disagrees?

Earlier in *A Passage to India*: "Mrs. Moore pushed up the shutters and looked out. . . . She felt increasingly (vision or nightmare?) that, though people are important, the relations between them are not, and that in particular too much fuss has been made over marriage; centuries of carnal embracement, yet man is no nearer to understanding man." Again, the familiar dichotomy, this time between persons and their external relations and yet we are given no hint, and no embodiment, of what a "person" may be in distinction from his relations with things and persons. From the protest about the gratuitousness of mere "carnal embracement" one may conclude that in an ideal society souls would embrace as well as bodies. The Shelleyan abyss lurking in the soul-itch has been sufficiently explored by D. H. Lawrence.

The frequent reminiscence of Shelley in Forster, with its suggestion of an immature sensibility not really adequate to its own age, serves to recall many passages in his earlier novels. Moreover, his visual sense is that of the Royal Academy and rollicks among the breathless clichés of landscape description even in *Howards End*:

Seen from the west the wight is beautiful beyond all laws

of beauty. It is as if a fragment of England floated forward to greet the foreigner—chalk of our chalk, turf of our turf, epitome of what will follow. And behind the fragment lies Southampton, hostess to the nations, and Portsmouth, a latent fire, and all around it, with double and treble collision of tides, swirls the sea. How many castles! How many churches, vanished or triumphant! How many ships, railways, and roads! What incredible variety of men working beneath that lucent sky to what final end!

This is the characteristic operatic lyricism of the will, a deliberate churning up of lethargic motions almost for the sake of the thrill of feeling emotional. Although it doesn't occur often, it is of a piece with the general tenor of his work, and suggests the functioning of a mildly conventional sensibility exercised in the service of familiar sentiments. The lack of freshness and directness of vision reflects the inertness with which Forster holds his ideas. James makes the point perfectly in the preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*: "There is, I think, no more nutritive or suggestive truth . . . than that of the perfect dependence of the 'moral' sense of a work of art on the amount of felt life concerned in producing it. The question comes back thus obviously, to the kind and degree of the artist's prime sensibility, which is the soil out of which his subject springs." The shrill Shelleyan vehemence of Forster's occasional nature description is not, therefore, something to be passed over with a generous gesture. The texture of that description is a reflex of the quality of his ideas and his characters.

A final passage from *Howards End* will serve to tie together all the rest:

It is impossible to see modern life steadily and to see it whole, and she had chosen to see it whole. Mr. Wilcox saw steadily. He never bothered over the mysterious or the private. The Thames might run inland from the sea, the chauffeur might conceal all passion and philosophy beneath his unhealthy skin. They knew their own business and he knew his.

The first remark is the carefully culled wit of the senior combi-

nation room. The irony of the second is slack. The third implies that truly profound experiences are glimpses or gulps of private lives, and that the poetry of life consists in peering behind the stolid facades. The example of the chauffeur points us to Dickens who shows us the same marvels of passion and philosophy behind unpromising exteriors. The unwelcome suggestion comes not in the inverted snobbery of self-consciously casting down class barriers, but in the unmistakable suggestion that passion and philosophy are more interesting or mysterious and thrilling when found in some unexpected quarter. Hood put it more breezily:

I want to know a butcher paints,
A baker rhymes for his pursuit;
Candlestickmaker haply mute,
Blows out his brains upon the flute.

In Forster, melodrama, or a violent working-up of tempo at key points in his novels, enables him to point a moral and adorn his tale. Thus, in *A Room with a View* the sudden murder witnessed by Lucy is a means of helping her to recognize the absence of passion in her own life. It is a frankly excogitated event loaded with *appliqué* sentiment. And there is no difference, save in degree, in each recurrence of "melodrama" in the later novels. Each instance is carefully worked up to enounce a proposition which can be stated quite independently of it. This aspect of Forster cannot be defended even on the grounds of deliberately naïve primitivism. (A completely successful example of melodrama employed to enforce Forster's point about passion *vs.* respectable estheticism occurs in D. H. Lawrence's short story, "None of That") Forster is in the unhappy position of trying to wrench his characters out of a state of deadened and cerebrealized emotion by means of voluntaristic emotion. His "passion" is always bogus because felt through the will as in nineteenth century opera. He can only *will* his characters into passion. He can't lead them into it. A conveniently brief example is found in *The Longest Journey*, where Rickie forces Agnes to "mind" the death of her fiancée: "It's the worst thing that can ever happen to you in all your life, and you've got to

mind it. They'll come saying, 'Bear up—trust to time.' No, no; they're wrong. Mind it."

Forster's embarrassing passion for the melodrama of coincidence surpasses Kipling's but is not different in kind. Of course, the conflicts and cleavages of melodrama can never yield new insight because they are mechanically predetermined. In fact, melodrama, like the split man, is not an artistic achievement but the by-product of cultural neurosis. The hypnotized acceptance of rigid distinctions is necessary to any kind of violent clash between characters in such a world—characters which are always stiffly and stupidly dull because born of a bogus parentage. With such counters as he accepts from the ready-made dichotomies of his world, Forster, like Kipling, can only go through the motions of testing, assaying and judging, because everything has really been decided in advance. The sheep and the goats carry well-known brands. Another essay will attempt to peer behind these blind conflicts to which Kipling and Forster bring their characters and from which they find no escape.

by *Richmond Croom Beatty*

JOHN CROWE RANSOM AS POET

THE poetry of Mr. Ransom has been from the beginning a poetry fundamentally critical in intention and in this sense has foreshadowed his later and broader development as a writer. *Poems About God* was published by Holt in 1918 while the author, then 30, was serving as a Lieutenant with the A.E.F. in France. There is not a single war poem in the volume, though by way of partial explanation it should be added that virtually all thirty-three pieces had been completed from one to two years before.

Christopher Morley, to whom the book was dedicated, wrote acutely of the intellectual motive behind it. Finding the term God in rather frequent utterance among men and being of an inquiring spirit, Ransom, he says, "set himself to examine his heart to find out just what significance this word may have in the emergencies of daily life." It is a book, he adds, which, though rich in humor, contains also much humility.

With time's perspective to assist us we may suggest still another observation; Namely, that from the beginning of his distinguished career as a man of letters, Ransom has been concerned with fundamental issues. In *God Without Thunder* he addressed himself to the overwhelmingly important task of evaluating the old and new Testament conceptions of God and of indicating in moral terms, the consequences of our accepting the latter. In his numerous agrarian articles he was interested in establishing a critique of twentieth century industrialism and in defining a good society. And in his recent criticism he has been working consistently and inductively toward an ontological basis for the aesthetic judgment. To contemplate the range of his ambitions as a writer is to begin to appreciate his significance in contemporary literature.

The comments of Morley which have just been quoted parallel those of the author's own preface. The first poems he ever wrote were done without any systematic design. "I was therefore duly surprised to notice that each of them made considerable use of the term God. I studied the matter a little, and came to the conclusion that this was the poetic of all terms possible; was a term always being called into requisition during the great moments of the soul, now in tones of love, and now indignantly; and was the very last word that a man might say when standing in the presence of that ultimate mystery to which all our great experiences reduce." From among the many occasions in which he could imagine himself pronouncing the name of God sincerely and spontaneously ("never by that way of routine which is death to the aesthetic and religious emotions") Ransom chose the most significant ones for his subject matter.

The result was an extraordinary variety within a sovereign unity of design. His first offering is "The Swimmer," its theme an escape from the sultry dog day heat. It is to be noted that he is swimming naked, in a natural lake, not in a tile pool. He is a country boy, though one who expresses himself occasionally in the formal and legalistic vocabulary that carries with it a characteristic accent:

The water is my native seat
And more than ever cool and sweet
So long by forfeiture escheat.

The poem expresses the romantic desire to linger forever beneath the water, where the curse of our first garden is at last unsaid. But it does not stop there:

Watch ticks every second grimmer
Come to the top, O wicked swimmer.

The romantic escape will not satisfy him.

"Noonday Grace," which follows, embodies the present-immediate-past contrast. It is important to observe that the appearance of this theme antedates his reading of Eliot. Of further

importance is the fact that the contrast is rendered in terms of Ransom's own tradition, a noonday, typically ample southern meal:

My good old father tucked his head
(His face the color of gingerbread)
Over the table my mother had spread
And folded his leathery hands and said:

We thank thee, Lord, for this thy grace
And all thy bounties to the race;
Turn not away from us thy face
'Till we come to our final resting place.

The poet can duly love his father's piety, but he must nonetheless confess himself a young man with an appetite. His own prayer, offered with total fervency, runs in considerably more gusty tones:

Thank you, good Lord, for dinner-time
Gladly I come from the sweat and grime
To play in your Christian pantomime.

He goes on to suggest the simple but aesthetic accompaniments of the meal—the clean fresh napkin and the roses—along with the morning's milk, the country ham, the tomatoes, beans, yams, and cornpone. It is an honest account, and God has His place in it, along with the blackberry pie. Ransom is depicting, perhaps innocently here, the kind of total experience which he treats in detail in his later criticism. It is the world's body.

There are several love poems in the volume. In what is possibly his most interesting one, his subject is a lady, wrapped in a private contemplation of God, blind to her lover and to the ordinary rustic scene in which they are placed. It is another characteristically southern occasion, with the farm bell, the four leaf clovers, and the hungry but patient bird dog serving as frame for the scene. Yet these details do not tempt the poet into an overemphasis upon the superficialities of local color. He is primarily concerned with depicting a psychological situation:

the lover waiting for his abstracted lady to return to the natural accompaniments of her being, "to come home from God."

With "Grace" we have to consider one of the most powerful poems in the collection. It begins innocently. The narrator introduces a southern hired man who comes over, saying casually that he thought he would help at working the corn before the rains set in. There was no mention of the dollar that would be paid him when the day's work was finished. They whistled a few bars of a familiar hymn and fell to plowing.

At noon he joined the family for dinner. He never thought of bringing his own lunch or of going for it to the crossroad's store. Neither does Ransom suggest this cash-nexus alternative; he is too completely within his tradition to think of it. After the pickles and pie they sat under a maple tree and discussed the Baptist religion, the sun proving too hot for work to be immediately resumed. Did John really perform all that dipping of his crowd in the Jordan? Couldn't Baptists backslide, too? These were the questions. Finally they returned to the fields, in the still oppressive heat. And then,

He fell in the furrow, an honest place
And an easy place for a man to fall.
His horse went marching blindly on
In a beautiful dream of a great fat stall.
And God shown on in merry mood,
For it was a foolish kind of sprawl,
And I found a hulk of heaving meat
That wouldn't answer me at all.

What did this mean? What had God wrought? This was rottenness and evil:

I thought of the prayers the fool had prayed
To his God, and I was seeing red,
When all of a sudden he gave a heave
And then with shuddering—vomited!
And God, who had just received full thanks
For all his kindly daily bread
Now called it back again—perhaps
To see that his birds of the air were fed.

Denied the decency of blood, he laid him down in his vomit and died, and the poet vomited too, amid the sweet corn, the music of the thrush, and the cawing of a solitary crow. It is realism growing out of a situation faithfully described. Ransom has not yet mastered the more subtle irony of his later style. But the elements of that irony are all present in this unblinking record of incident and scene.

With "Geometry" he first suggests the problem to which, twelve years later, and with a different intention he devoted his prose volume, *God Without Thunder*. Here he is trying to understand the attributes of the Deity. Looking out upon an unviolated wood, he is conscious only of disorder, of the work of a God who "still plants on as crazily as in his drivelling infancy." Here is the profligate God, that primary cause of the endless rivalries and struggles for survival which constitute nature. How easy it is to improve upon this handiwork:

I'm glad man has the hardihood
To tamper with creation's plan
And shape it worthier of man.

The slightest effort at even so significant an occupation as landscape gardening can mend matters; one needs to know merely the difference between even and odd.

This God, moreover, is given to inordinate fits of temper. Troubled by some "Godly Gout" he will lash whole fields of grain into desolation. The only judgment from such a fact possible to rational man is that the Deity who controls our fates is senseless; He is a God of Wrath. Hardy's influence is plainly evident in these lines, but again the implied reference to the leveled corn or wheat fields is drawn unmistakably from personal observation.

This is but one of several poems in which God is judged by anthropomorphic standards and found wanting in that moral sense which human beings have come so highly to value. If his were the "Power of God," he says elsewhere, he could never be governed by his own strict laws; his pity would plague him still, especially

pity for those women who must toil and suffer before sunrise. And in "Prayer" his indictment extends savagely to include even the Seraphim. Here Ransom describes an old woman, abusing her superannuate knees to supplicate for her son and for herself. When God beheld her thus punishing her tired bones, he felt ashamed, and

There on his heaven, and heard of all the hosts,
He groaned, he made a mighty face so wry
That several seraphim forgot their harping
And scolded thus: O what a wicked woman,
To shrew his splendid features out of shape.

The poet's wit is both entertaining and elaborate in a poem like "November," when he describes the lady his pious mother would have him wed.

[She] couldn't have made a sorrier choice
Than that same Smiley's daughter Kate,
Who prays for the sinners of the town
And never comes to meeting late,
Who sings soprano in the choir
And swallows Christian doctrine straight.
Of all the girls deliver me
From the girl you haven't the heart to hate!
Piety: O what a hideous thing!
And thirty-odd pounds she's underweight.

It is this sort of wit which serves as substitute for the tragic sense in much of Ransom's work. He is constantly on his guard against an overt expression of it. There is his impecunious urban preacher for instance:

Poor Thomas shepherds him a flock
Of city souls as hard as rock,
And though he will not fill his larder
He only preaches Christ the harder.

But his own young daughter is unconvertable, much more interested in Santa Claus than in the Saviour's gift. In treating her colloquy with her father, on Christmas eve, Ransom might easily have emphasized the pitiful failure of Thomas with his own

family, but to have done so would probably have appeared to him a romantic and possibly sentimental stressing of the obvious.

"The School" might be termed the earliest of the writer's several commentaries on expatriates. Hearing the scholars read of Helen, and of the age of Pericles, of proud Athens shining upon her hill, how could he remain content to live among his father's folk, in a narrow house and amid nauseous fields?

I kicked his clods for being common dirt,
Worthy a world which never could be Greek;
Cursed the paternity which planted me
One green leaf in a wilderness of autumn.

But the Lord cured his disaffection. He sent his way a pair of eyes that might have sat in any witless head, but to the poet they were deep as classic seas. What were dead Greek empires to him then? It is a poem obviously romantic in theme, yet again it is saved by the author's amused-intellectual awareness of how externally trivial are the instruments of his undoing.

After a quarter of a century *Poems About God* remains an interesting and fresh volume, rich with surprises. A number of its pieces are dramatic in structure, and it is apparent that Ransom favors this device, almost as often as the device of irony, as a method of escape from the subjective and innocent exploitation of his own personality. There is not a trace of sentimentality in the book, just as there is no evidence of any love of rhetoric. Its metrics and diction are consonant with its originality of theme; his use of both is bold and original. It is obviously the work of that kind of poet about whom one wishes to know more. To generalize, one might add that the poetry is southern in the only valid sense of the term as a literary label; it is southern in that Ransom stays always close to the particular, to the underlying human truths about his region. In the last poem of the book we have

A cluck of timeless silly birds,
A guilty grey, and it was dawn.

And an anonymous man gropes dazedly toward the drawn curtains, to open them once more, though far gone with chills and fever.

Chills and Fever was the title given his second volume. It appeared in 1924. The selections it contains were in large measure the outgrowth of an exciting interest in poetry on the part of a number of young Vanderbilt students, professors, and their Nashville friends. In April, 1922, this group had founded a magazine, the *Fugitive*, of which nineteen numbers appeared before publication ceased, in 1925. Ransom, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Robert Penn Warren, and Merrill Moore were the members whose subsequent reputations proved most important, but there were a good many others from the city itself, and the various issues contained contributions by Hart Crane, Louis Untermeyer, John Gould Fletcher, Robert Graves, Laura Riding, and several other well known writers. "The *Fugitive*," declares Mr. Tate, "was doubtless the only 'little magazine' which suspended publication not for lack of funds but for lack of an editor." The men were too busy with their own writing to spare the necessary time for the job.

It was an extremely interesting group, one in some respects unique in modern American letters. Writing in general of the quickening of the literary imagination in the South at this period, Mr. Tate continues: "I believe it was a little different from the literary excitement in other regions at that time. After the war the South again knew the world, but it had a memory of another war; with us, entering the world once more meant not the obliteration of the past but a heightened consciousness of it; so we had, at any rate in Nashville, a double focus, a looking two ways, which gave a special dimension to the writings of our school—not necessarily a superior quality—which American writing as a whole seemed to lack. . . . The great universities of the East could have boasted in that period groups of writers quite as good as ours, or better, though I doubt it; yet they were not groups in our sense, being associated only through the University and having a cosmopolitan range of interest without, I think, a simple

homogeneous background which they could take with them to the university where it might suffer little or no break in continuity. I would call the Fugitives an intensive and historical group as opposed to the eclectic and cosmopolitan groups that flourished in the East." The important members were either Kentuckians or Tennesseans, and Ransom was regarded by them all as the Nestor of the party.

The prologue to *Chills and Fever* defines the Volume's essential tone. It is anti-romantic, in the sense in which romanticism is reflected in the work of such nineteenth century poets as Shelley. Ransom is aware of the force of the tradition against which he is rebelling. He can overhear those readers who have been schooled in it asking,

If grief be in his mind
Where is his fair child moaning in the wind?
Where is the white frost snowing on his head?
When did he stalk and weep and not loll in his bed?

These are the conventional romantic attitudes and themes; they constitute what might be called the romantic pose. His answer to such inquiries is succinct:

I will be brief,
Assuredly I have a grief,
And I am shaken, but not as a leaf.

The center of Ransom's mature poetry becomes apparent very early in *Chills and Fever*. It has been defined by Robert Penn Warren as a preoccupation with the decay of the sensibility of modern man, and may be likened to that "dissociation of sensibility" which T. S. Eliot declares, apparently set in about the middle of the seventeenth century—with the rise of science as we know it. It has been remarked, Warren observes, that Ransom's poetry deals with intimate little psychological cruxes. To an astonishing degree, in a number of cases, the hero or heroine of the poem is a sufferer from this condition. "The poem itself is a commentary on the situation, its irony deriving from the

fact that these perhaps otherwise admirable people cannot fathom or perform their natures."

Warren's point can be abundantly illustrated. "Necrological," for instance, deals with an intellectual friar, who creeps from his monastery on the dawn after a battle had been fought in the adjacent fields. The naked bodies gory and wolf eaten, lie stretched upon the plain. These were once whole men, men capable of ultimate gestures:

Beneath the blue azure of the firmament
Was a dead warrior, clutching whose mighty knees
Was a leman, who with her flame had warmed his tent,
For him enduring all men's pleasantries.

But the meaning of this violence and passion is incomprehensible to the friar; he can only sit upon a hill and hang his head, "Riddling, riddling and lost in a vast surmise." He is modern man; he is the modern scholar. The divorce in his nature between action and contemplation is complete.

"Nocturne" suggests the same dichotomy, if somewhat less successfully. Shall the young man of the poem "carry his dutiful flesh to the ball, rather than open his book, which is flat and metaphysical?" He is almost persuaded to go, thus merging his personality with others, sharing a common human experience. But he lacks both the heart and the head for it, is aware of how he would feel the morning after.

Then there are the "Spectral Lovers," haunting a thicket of April mist.

Lovers they knew they were, but why unclasped, unknissed?

The lady is more daring

This is the mad moon, and must I surrender all?
If he but ask it, I shall.

But dismaying considerations pinch his heart. He is another modern man, another intellectual.

Am I reeling with the sap of April like a drunkard?
Blessed is he that taketh this richest of cities;
But it is so stainless, the sack were a thousand pities;
This is that marble fortress not to be conquered,
Lest its white peace in the black flame turn to tinder
And an unutterable cinder.

The possibilities of the tense occasion go unfulfilled. Yet in recording those possibilities faithfully, not only in terms of the romantic situation itself but through suggesting the sick reticences of the lover, the over-wrought misgivings from which he is unable to free himself, Ransom achieves the basis for his characteristic irony. For it is the nature of irony to look both ways, to appreciate all sides of a situation. It is the safest device for guarding the poet against an exaggerated statement of his subject, and it constitutes at the same time a defense on his part against the suspicion of innocence.

A good many pieces on the subject of God also appear in the volume; Ransom is still concerned with his earliest considered theme. There is the "Tall Girl" who is invited to walk with the lissome necked Queens of Hell. But the Queen of Heaven on the other side of the road ("Just an old woman, my pet, who wishes you well") warns her that accepting the invitation will never come to good. In "Night Voices" the old and new Testament conceptions of Deity are presented in a dark duologue; Christ is talking with Nicodemus. The latter proves the realist of the occasion:

Our order doth not use
To ease them with false tidings of good news.
Our fashion is a jealous elder god
Who tempereth sometimes his chastening rod
But raiseth no dead Jews.

This is too stern a theology for Christ; it slays the cripple's hope, the hope of others who can endure the world only because, one day, they anticipate a resurrection. But He is counselled by an ancient wisdom:

Take heed, high hearted youth,
For they will kill thee save thou speak them sooth,
And they will say, attentive to thy grave,
The little carpenter's promises were brave,
But carrion telleth truth!

The antagonists arrive at no conclusion or agreement. Dawn finds them trodding, spectre-white, the gardens of the dead.

Death poems are recurrent in the volume, and one will observe about them that the situation which attracts Ransom is that of unfulfillment; his characters have not successfully realized themselves as human beings. "Emily Hardcastle, Spinster" is such a person:

We shall come tomorrow morning, who are not to have her love.
We shall bring no face of envy, but a gift of praise and lilies
To the stately ceremonial we are not the heroes of.

The red-eyed sisters would not wait as she did; they married themselves to merchants. And while the local boys delayed, expecting to have Emily by default, the grizzled Baron came for her.

He came, likewise, for "John Whiteside's Daughter," a child. Her brown study so primly propped, "astonished us all." She had represented, to those who contemplated her body, the epitome of vitality, a tireless heart. Her change vexes those who attend her—*vexes* them (the understatement is significant and deliberate) because their calculations and preconceptions have been cancelled by the reality of Death.

The wit which informs almost every poem in *Chills and Fever* is fused usually with a fresh and original treatment of subject matter. Ransom is never content to retell an old tale without adding something of his own to the traditional body of legend behind it. Nowhere is this comment more plainly evident than in "Armageddon". Christ and Anti-Christ do not disport themselves here in terms of the conventional scriptural solemnities. Instead, they are presented as two Knights, both gentlemen a little tired of their ageless warfare. Anti-Christ does not rush

upon his enemy but invites him, instead, to share the honors of his tiring hall:

With feasting they concluded every day,
And when the other shaped his phrases thicker,
Christ, introducing water in the liquor,
Made wine of more ethereal boquet.

At wassail Antichrist would pitch the strain
For unison of all the retinue;
Christ beat the time, and hummed a stave or two,
But would not say the words, which were profane.

It is this sort of imagination, conventionally shocking, that defines the freshness of Ransom's poetry. It is supplemented by an equally arresting and unworn diction. The following words are cited almost at random from the book: *perdure, clomb, concumbent, thole, frore, ingle, halidom, carline, debouched, chevelure, catafalque, sleasy, wiven, byre*. Many others could be added. They are all consciously used, and they almost invariably strengthen the wit which pervades their context. He may be said, indeed, to rely on such words as these, and upon the unusual situations which they assist in portraying, much more frequently than upon startling similies or metaphors or upon impassioned speech. One looks without reward, that is, for such figures as "While the evening is stretched out against the sky, like a patient etherized upon a table." The dramatic incident or the total structure of the poem counts much more with him than does an isolated excitement of phrase.

Two Gentlemen in Bonds was published in 1927, and readers familiar with Ransom's previous volume doubtless found it characteristic in manner; his subjects are varied, his diction typically vigorous. What distinguishes the book initially from *Chills and Fever* is its surprisingly large number of time conscious poems, although these are not usually among his most successful.

"Vision by Sweetwater" is a momentary glimpse into the dark of the poet's mind, one in which he sees an earlier generation of the bright young virgins whom his aunt would entertain. Although wholly unstressed, the suggestion of Age and Death is unmis-

takable, "Ecologue" approaches the theme in dialogue form. The subject of discussion between Jane Sneed and John Black is the alteration which maturity accomplishes in human character. The innocent wasteful games of childhood have become an incredible tradition to them. They have learned to fear, and as their fears and the desperation of their lot are rehearsed, John declares:

We lovers mournfully
Exchange our bleak despairs. We are one part love
And nine parts bitter thought.

"Piazza Piece" and "Moments of Minnie" likewise belong in this category. The former, a sonnet, pictures the "gentleman in a dust-coat" warning the young lady that he must have her soon. Lazy and beautiful Minnie, whose charms were more enduring than her mind, is described as broken by age and disease. The poet prefers to leave her suffering presence and, washing his mind with memory, to think of her as she was when young. One other poem, "Blue Girls", might be added to this list, but it scarcely warrants discussion. In general, what he writes in this vein tends to leave an impression of thinness. Ransom seems too afraid that should he appear ever so slightly shaken, his reader will conclude that he is shaken as a leaf.

In the "Miller's Daughter" he returns to his central theme, that of the dissociated modern intellectual. This young girl is a normal fresh human being who helps her father with his work. The poet, a "poor bookish hind" with "too much pudding" in his brain, is unable to approach her in terms of a common intimacy. He is too learned, too reticent; he is cut off. There is no relation, in other words, between what he knows and what he sees before him:

What then to do but stare—
A learned eye of our most Christian nation
And foremost philosophical generation—
At primary chrome of hair.

Astronomied Oes of Eyes
And the white moons I tremble to behold
(More than my books did shake me, or a tale told)
And all her parts likewise.

"Man without Sense of Direction" embodies another excellent development of this dilemma. Here Ransom is concerned with a person of noblest mind and powerful leg who "cannot fathom nor perform his nature." What invidious gods have willed this? Can love be the cause? No, he has won the loveliest for his bride:

Yet scarcely he issues from the warm chamber
Flushed with her passion, when cold as lead
Once more he walks where waves beyond number
Of sorrow buffet his curse-hung head.

Wherever he is, in street or mead, his doom is upon him. Not knowing his sins, he is nonetheless punished, "and for his innocence walks in hell." Desperate, he rushes back to the tender thing in his keeping, feigning his small passion large. But let his cold lips be an omen to her. Never shall she "kiss that harried one to peace." It is a vivid picture of the locked-in egoist, preyed upon by his own tortured mind. Moreover it is one of Ransom's most serious poems. The familiar mocking wit which one associates with his diction is altogether absent from it.

The most frequently recurrent type of poem in the volume is that which renders an acute psychological conflict, or crux, or situation. Invariably these poems are objectively developed, and in most instances dramatically. "Parting, without a Sequel" brings into focus the briefest moment of time: a lady dispatches a letter to her lover, announcing the end of their relationship, and goes to stand beneath her father's oak. The effect is achieved through the vividness with which Ransom describes the intense conflict in her mind:

Away went the messenger's bicycle,
His serpent's track went up the hill forever,
And all the time she stood there hot as fever
And cold as any icicle.

"Two in August" supplements this theme. Here on the surface is a trite subject, a lover's quarrel; but Ransom handles it with arresting novelty by presenting his lovers in the role of married, complex, intelligent persons. They have quarreled late in the night, violating the nature of that occasion, which is for sleep, or dreams, or for love. The cause of their difference he makes no effort to suggest, but it is plainly mental, not physical. The success of the poem derives from the fact that, once having established the subtlety and intensity of their natures, he is content to describe their behavior in purely objective, naturalistic fashion; so much more is thus implied than is stated:

She in terror fled from the married chamber
Circuiting the dark room like a string of amber
Round and round and back,
And would not light one lamp against the black,
And heard the clock that clanged: Remember, Remember.

And he must tread barefooted the dim lawn,
Soon he was up and gone.

"The Equilibrists" is the most passionate poem in the book. Here again are two intense adult modern lovers. The conflict in their natures is between Honor and Desire, and the former is triumphant. What makes the poem, however, is the success with which Ransom presents the consuming carnal appetite of the lover.

Full of her long white arms and milky skin
He had a thousand times remembered sin.

The details mount: her body, a white field ready for love; her mouth, her eyes. But always there are the Doves, crying Honor, Honor. The lovers obey the code, dreadfully forswear each other, burning yet beaten apart. The poet describes the consequence of their choice and its antithesis:

In Heaven you have heard no marriage is,
No white flesh tinder to your lecheries,
Your male and female tissue sweetly shaped
Sublimed away, and furious blood escaped.

Great loves lie in Hell, the stubborn ones
 Infatuate of the flesh upon the bones;
 Stuprate, they rend each other when they kiss;
 The pieces kiss again—no end to this.

One might argue that these stanzas lack conviction since modern lovers are emancipated. But this sociological observation—abstract and of little value—is of no interest to Ransom. His concern is, rather, with presenting the conflict between flesh and mind, or let us say, between the natural impulses of man struggling unsuccessfully against the restraints of a disciplined society. This man might be termed a Hamlet, as Coleridge conceived that character: he is incapable of action; or to repeat Ransom's phrase, "he cannot fathom or perform his nature."

The conflicting principals in the sequence of twenty sonnets from which the title of the book derives are the brothers Paul and Abbott, and it is noteworthy that, as with so many of Ransom's characters, they are in *bonds*. The former is a gusty hunter, the latter something of a misanthrope and a scholar-poet. Their cousin, Edith, is confused as to which to favor. The two men meet in their ancestral garden, after Paul's return from a vigorous ride. Which of them shall eat the one peach hanging under the wicket? Abbott wanted nothing:

She was small, ripe, round, a maid not maculate
 Saving her bright cheeks, but the rude bridegroom
 Claims her, his heavy hand has led her home
 Nor did he pull her gently through his gate
 As had a lover dainty and delicate:
 The two-and-thirty cut-throats doing his will
 Tore off her robe and stripped her bare until
 Drunken with appetite, he devoured and ate.

Ransom achieves an elaborate *double entendre* in these lines. Moreover, they foreshadow the narrative as it later develops. The king, it is announced, is coming with all his retinue, to stay for three days, devouring Paul's substance. It is the way of the world, his disinterested brother informs him. His Majesty has given him protection from thieves,

But you must pay for this relief;
Strong governments must always eat much beef;
On n'a beaux etats qu' avec gendarmes.

As for Abbott, he declares himself free from all responsibilities as host. "My compliments to your king. Say I'm not in." He retires to his mouldy den, in the topmost northern tower.

Consider his Highness, once his thrall Abbott beholds him:

Helped from his horse, his fox-face peaked with travel,
His bowels infirm, his water stopped with gravel,
Must to bed, with a pair of leeches at his bedside
And a Bishop pouring medicine for pride,
And no stomach to hear the speech of welcoming.

Later, he opens his fishy green eyes. He can found a state, he says, and immediately decrees the wedding of Paul and Edith. But the bride slips from her husband's side at night and crawls up the stairs to Abbott's door. She hears him denouncing the world and envying the happy dead. His bitter words stir even the spirit of his Sire, long laid in clammy lodgment: "The insufferable pow-wow in his son's house did him most unfilial wrong;" it pricked him wide awake. And before he turned to sleep again, he apprehended the meaning of the cleavage which had occurred:

Now, I remember life; and out of me
Lawfully leaping, the twin seed of my loins,
Brethern, whom no split fatherhood disjoins;
But in the woman's-house how hatefully
They trod upon each other! till now I see
My manhood halved and squandered, two heads, two hearts,
Each partial son despising the other's parts;
And so it is, and so it always will be.

Their bonds are their character which are divided. They are both modern, split-up personalities. And these bonds are not to be broken. It is the familiar theme of "Necrological" and the "Miller's Daughter," given a different, more elaborate, and more formal orchestration.

The poems in which wit appears to be the major agency of

interest are still numerous in this last volume of Ransom's verse. I am inclined to agree with Robert Penn Warren that in only two of them, "Survey of Literature" and "Our Two Worthies" does this faculty appear as an irresponsible instrument, or in other words, an instrument which is not functional. The former is clever *jeu de spirit*; yet Ransom does capture, if only impressionistically, the salient qualities of many of his men of letters:

Sing a song for Percy Shelley,
Drowned in pale lemon jelly.

The list of couplets could be lengthened. Similarly, in "Our Two Worthies", the poet accurately suggests the historical significance of Jesus, our Paraclete and of Paul our Exegete. The criticism would be that he goes no further; he is simply having a good time with both of them. But he is still interested in his earliest theme, in God and God's lieutenants.

"Amphibious Crocodile" is a highly amusing commentary on the futility of literary expatriation. Crocodile might be a Rhodes Scholar (or even a Henry James) who learned at length that there is no escape from one's own tradition. In due season he rises from the waves and clammers on the bank to clothe himself, "having cleansed his toes of bayous of Florida and estuaries of Nile." At length, in grey spats, he crosses the ocean. Paris, Notre Dame. The trenches. London. Westminster. Presented to King George!

Who is the gentleman whose teeth are so large?
That is Mr. Crocodile the renowned aesthete.

Then there is the English country: Week-end parties. Hunting, on a flat saddle, with the gymnastical English gentry. Scotch and soda with the Balliol men. But Crocodile is growing distressingly conscious of his bunions.

It is too too possible he has wandered far
From the simple center of his rugged nature.
I wonder, says he, if I am the sort of creature
To live by travel, projects, *affaires de coeur*?

After other adventures, uniformly unsatisfying, a news note appears, in fineprint, in one of the Thursday Reviews: "Old Robert Crocodile is packed up and gone." His dear friends cannot find him. The ladies write as usual, but their lavender notes are returned. He has successfully got out of sight:

Crocodile hangs his pretty clothes on a limb
And lies with his fathers, and with his mothers too,
And his brothers and sisters as it seems right to do;
The family religion is good enough for him.

Full length he lies and goes as water goes
He weeps for joy and welters in the flood,
Floating he lies extended many a rood,
And quite invisible but for the end of his nose.

In "Dead Boy" Ransom returns to the theme of mortality essentially as he treated it in *Chills and Fever*. It is the event of death as an outrageous because premature occurrence that interests him; the life taken has not been fulfilled. As always, he is at considerable pains to avoid any trace of sentimentality. This was not a beautiful boy, nor good, nor clever:

A pig with a pasty face, I had always said,
Squealing for cookies, kinned by pure pretense
With a noble house. But the little man quite dead.
I can see the forebears antique lineaments.

The strength of the poem derives in large measure from Ransom's identifying the child's loss with the frustration of the family's continuity. Here is the old tree's last branch wrenched away; it is too late to beget another. The hearts of his kinsmen are therefore hurt "with a deep dynastic wound." It is the end of the line.

If one were pressed to cite the most characteristic of Ransom's poems he could scarcely find a better one than "Janet Waking," which deserves to be quoted in full:

Beautifully Janet slept
Till it was deeply morning. She woke then
And thought about her dainty-feathered hen,
To see how it had kept.

One kiss she gave her mother,
Only a small one gave she to her daddy
Who would have kissed each curl of his shining baby;
No kiss at all for her brother.

"Old Chucky, Old Chucky!" she cried,
Running on little pink feet upon the grass
To Chucky's house and listening. But alas,
Her Chucky had died.

It was a transmogrifying bee
Came droning down on Chucky's old bald head
And sat and put the poison. It scarcely bled,
But how exceedingly

And purply did the knot
Swell with venom and communicate
Its rigor! Now the poor comb stood up straight
But Chucky did not.

So there was Janet
Kneeling on the wet grass, crying her brown hen
(Translated far beyond the daughters of men)
To rise and walk upon it.

And weeping fast as she had breath
Janet implores us, "Wake her from her sleep!"
And would not be instructed in how deep
Was the forgetful kingdom of death.

Here the wit of the fourth stanza (with its ironical juxtaposition of *transmogrifying* and *bee*—the pompous adjective with the insignificant noun) is paralleled in stanza six with the phrase "translated far beyond the daughters of men." It is such a statement as one might apply to a saint or to some other person of great importance; here it is used to describe the death of a chicken! The last two lines, moreover, are powerful in their restraint yet rich with overtones and implications. It remains the most successful poem in the volume.

Two further pieces are worth attention as illustrations of Ransom's latest manner in poetry. "Prelude to an Evening" appeared in 1935. It is unrhymed, and the characteristic of his published volumes has been abandoned for a much heavier concentration of

idea. Yet the subject of the Prelude is nonetheless a familiar one with his readers: it is that of the self-obsessed intellectual, preoccupied with the images of his own invaded intelligence. Never can this man cease to feel, "poising round the sunny room, invisible evil, deprived and bold." So it is with the wife; she, too, is aware of Time and Fear.

You shall be listening for the low wind,
The warning sibilance of pines.

You like a waning moon, and I accusing
Our too banded Eumenides,
While you pronounce Noes wanderingly
And smooth the heads of hungry children.

Neither she nor "the tired wolf" her husband is able to fuse his personality with those of their family. They are divided from them by the monsters of the mind.

"Painting: A Head," one of Ransom's most difficult poems, treats (again without rhyme but with intense verbal concentration) a problem with which he has been continuously preoccupied in his criticism: the dichotomy between Science and Art. The apparition head, smiling upon canvas, depends upon nothing. It

Is nameless and as authored for the evil
Historian head hunters neither book
Nor state and is therefore distinct from tart
Heads with crowns and guilty gallery heads

This painted head, this extravagant device of art, is useless; it has not functioned practically in the world, either for good or for evil. It is something to be contemplated, not exploited, is guiltless of conceiving either book or state. One may appropriately recall Ransom's statement in *The World's Body*: "An imitation [an art object] is better than the original in one thing only. Not being actual it cannot be used; it can only be known. Art exists for knowledge, but nature is an object both to knowledge and to use; the latter disposition of nature includes that knowledge of it which is peculiarly scientific, and sometimes it is so

imperious as to pre-empt all possibilities of the former." Probably this observation regarding his later verse is pertinent, and it is offered descriptively, not pejoratively, though perhaps a little plaintively: The luxuriant stream of Ransom's poetry has dried up, during the last fifteen years, into a thin and turgid trickle. The incisive wit and brilliant diction of the published volumes has disappeared. The poet, in short, has been swallowed up by the critic.

But we cannot stop with this comment, for the body of his earlier work remains, though in relatively inaccessible editions. The most striking attributes of that work for readers of the present and of the future will likely continue to rest in its language and its successfully rendered dramatic situations. The slight self-conscious archaisms of the former are usually in keeping with the nature of his subjects; he is fond of writing about knights and ladies. Like the late E. A. Robinson, he is given to presenting medieval characters endowed with complex modern sensibilities. But his archaisms are justifiable for another reason: Ransom is an extremely learned author; his sense of tradition never fails him. The juxtaposition of a conversational tone against a deliberate, slightly mocking pedantry of diction may be termed simply one way of registering his awareness of the past and of enriching his communication to his reader. At all events, poetry to him has proved a serious and adult preoccupation. The kind which chiefly should interest us, he says, "is not that of a child, or of that eternal youth which is in some women, but the act of an adult mind; and I will add, the act of a fallen mind, since ours too are fallen." He might well in this statement have been describing his own achievement. It is an achievement, restrained but rich in variety, which will likely remain both significant and exciting among readers who retain a serious esteem for the art.

by Nettie S. Tillet

POET OF THE PRESENT CRISIS

IN a letter home shortly before America entered the last war, Walter Hines Page related that one morning after he and Foreign Secretary Grey had finished quarrelling over a ship incident and he was leaving the office, Grey called him back to put a question to him. Grey asked Page his opinion of Wordsworth's war poetry. Then Grey hastened to comment that he considered Wordsworth's the greatest of all war poetry because it does not glorify war, but has to do with the philosophy of war. Viscount Grey was not alone in falling back upon Wordsworth's poetry as he watched the lights go out over Europe in 1914. Wordsworth's "Character of the Happy Warrior" was the favorite poem of America's Commander in Chief, Woodrow Wilson. There were, also, several studies—notably those of F. S. Boas, W. T. Davidson, A. V. Dicey, and E. de Selincourt—pointing out the parallel between Wordsworth's time and those war times, and stressing the adequacy with which Wordsworth had expressed the national ideals of England and other freedom-loving countries in this century.

As a matter of fact, when at the beginning of the last century Wordsworth looked upon "the present face of things" and "trembled at the sorrow of the time," he was facing a world that much more closely resembled the troubled times upon which we have fallen than it did the world of Grey and Wilson and the Kaiser. Furthermore, this last generation of warriors has undertaken the ardours of war with fewer illusions of glory connected therewith than perhaps any other generation ever has; in other words, it should be in a frame of mind for Wordsworth's philosophic, yet realistic comments upon war. And, most important factor of all in making him pre-eminently the poet of the present crisis, Wordsworth in his youth underwent soul-stirring experiences as

a result of the turmoil of his times which should bring him peculiarly close to this generation; he passed through stages of feeling—"conflict of sensations without name"—which have perhaps been paralleled in many thoughtful lives that have matured in recent years and which are perhaps now being paralleled more closely than ever before. The soul-sickness and his recovery from it Wordsworth recorded in his autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*. The parts dealing with Wordsworth's experiences in the French Revolution and the personal crisis that followed, John Morley called an abiding lesson to brave men how to bear themselves in hours of public stress.

Indeed, those students of the present upheaval who would trace the origin of fascism to the nationalistic spirit of the German romanticists in the late eighteenth century and who see a resemblance between the mood of fascism and the general mood of romanticism in the nineteenth century would do well to remember that if the romantic movement bred the disease, it also produced the antidote. Not even Churchill has expressed so exactly why England took up Germany's challenge in 1939 as has Wordsworth. As to his nationalism, Wordsworth does throughout his poetry sum up the ideals that have glorified English history as no other single poet has done; but he did not hesitate to turn in frank, if righteous, indignation upon his country. He mournfully recorded that England had fought two wars against liberty in a single generation. To one of them, the war against French Revolutionists, he felt so openly hostile that he tells us in *The Prelude* he refused to bow his head in church services when prayers were said for English soldiers engaged in that war—" . . . I only, like an uninvited guest, Whom no one owned, sate silent . . . Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come!" He even admits: "I rejoiced, Yea afterwards—truth most painful to record!—Exulted, in the triumph of my soul, When Englishmen by thousands were overthrown, Left without glory on the field, or driven, Brave hearts! to shameful flight." However conservative he became in after years and whatever toning down he may have done to youthful passages on Burke, Wordsworth left in *The*

Prelude, after a lifetime of revision of the poem, the statement that "... much have they to account for, who could tear By violence at one decisive rent, From the best youth in England their dear pride, their joy in England" as did her leaders "when in arms Britain put forth her free-born strength in league . . . with those confederate Powers" fighting the French Revolutionists. Wordsworth was, as he proclaims, a "Patriot of the world." It is, indeed, difficult for one who has spent any time under the shadow of the great English individualists who spoke so boldly for liberty of the individual a century ago to see any connection between them and political groups who have developed the most crushing and thorough regimentation ever known.

The general picture of Europe which unfolded before Wordsworth is presented mainly in his sonnets. These poems startle today with the exactness with which they miniature our world. They reflect "... one man, of men the meanest, too! Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo, With mighty nations for his underlings." They reveal "feeble heads to slavery prone" that bow before that man, and cry shame upon them. They show an enemy "impatient to put out the only light Of liberty that yet remains on earth." They mourn the loss of liberty by first one country and then another, with an occasional glorying in a courageous manifesto or other expression of brave defiance. They glimpse the refugee problem, one sonnet recording the dignity of a negro refugee from France who had crossed the Channel in the boat with the poet, and another poem the anguish of a fugitive mother separated from her child. Two sonnets note the absence in England, and the need, of men like the great men who in times past have moved among Englishmen and taught them "how rightfully a nation shone in Splendour: what strength was that would not bend But in magnanimous meekness" . . . that "by the soul Only the nations shall be great and free." They express amazement that France's cause has brought forth in France or in England no such men as those. These sonnets Mr. Dicey says may be termed "the Psalter of England"; and

he adds that, like the Psalter, they combine penitence for past errors with confidence in final triumph of a just cause. Certainly they do not dodge England's errors or the need of a soul purging: she has become "a fen of stagnant waters," her life only drest for show," the homely beauty of the good old cause" and "pure religion breathing household laws" lost. Even to his day, the poet insists, "If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa, Aught good were destined," England would step between. He warns her that the time has come to wean her soul "from its emasculating food; The truth should now be better understood." Yet he realized that with all her abjectness, England remained "the bulwark for the cause of men"; and he thundered out: "It is not to be thought of that the flood Of British freedom, which . . . from dark antiquity hath flowed . . . in bogs and sands Should perish. . . . We must be free or die who speak the tongue That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold Which Milton held." In short, he saw "Earth's best hopes" resting all on Britain, just as we have seen in recent years "Earth's best hopes" rest for a considerable length of time all on Britain.

Even before Napoleon gathered his barges at Boulogne to invade England, Wordsworth had looked across the Channel and noted "the coast of France, how near! Drawn almost into frightful neighborhood." Then as Napoleon waited for the right moment for invasion, Wordsworth used his pen for England against her enemies, as had the great poet who had inspired the first of his sonnets; and, unlike the earlier poet, Wordsworth also trained with his neighbors to withstand the invaders. To the "Vanguard of Liberty, ye men of Kent," he proclaimed, "We all are with you now from shore to shore," and warned that it was "Victory or death." He called upon all his countrymen to waken, "Resolving (this a free-born nation can) To have one soul, and perish to a man, Or save this honoured land from every Lord But British reason and the British sword." So sure was he of invasion that he even wrote one sonnet called "Anticipation, October, 1803," which opens: "Shout for a mighty Victory is won! On British ground the Invaders are laid low," and ends

with a note of triumph worthy of those who recently won the Battle of Britain: "In glory will they sleep and endless sanctity."

Yet there are more valid claims of Wordsworth as the poet of this hour than the prophetic character which these sonnets assume as we reread them after almost a century and a half. One of those claims lies in what Grey called the philosophy of war which certain of the poems set forth. In the first place, Wordsworth has given us the most complete and the most admirable sketch of the military ideal of peace-loving peoples ever penned. The poem "The Character of the Happy Warrior," in fact, goes beyond interpretation of the military ideal and contains a summary of the great-minded citizen, the patriot—is, in the words of Frederick Meyers, "a manual of greatness" presented with "a Roman majesty in the simple and weighty speech." The poem is truly Anglo-Saxon in spirit, containing the epitome of English heroism from the time of King Alfred on through the service of those men who so skillfully manned the small boats that darted in and out the Great Armada and destroyed it, to those "so few to whom so many have been indebted for so much" today. The characterization coincides with much that is in the military creations of great English poets. Wordsworth's ideal warrior has, for instance, much in common with the worthy man painted by Chaucer, who "fro the tyme that he first bigan To riden out . . . loved chivalrie, Trouthe and honour, fredom and courteisie," the gentle knight, who "nevere yet no vileyne ne sayde In al his lyf unto no maner wight," the veteran of fifteen "mortal bailles" who yet bore himself with extreme modesty. And though Wordsworth's ideal lacks the swagger of Faulcombridge and the high spirits of Prince Hal, he has much in common with them and other great soldiers of Shakespeare. He has some of the rugged strength of Othello; and, like him and Prince Hal, and like the heroes that England particularly delights to acknowledge, Wordsworth's ideal warrior does not lie in wait for honor or for worldly state. Like Hal, he has none of Hotspur's inordinate appetite for Honor in the sense of glory to be won upon the battlefield, "those proud titles," the loss of which wounded Hotspur's spirit more than Hal's sword

did his flesh. Wordsworth's hero could not, of course, have had a past like Hal's, even though he could rise above it in a crisis. (The poet refused to connect Nelson's name with the poem because, he said, "Nelson's public life was stained with one great crime;" yet he admitted that Nelson "carried" most of the virtues mentioned and that many passages were suggested by what was known as excellent in Nelson's life, which had ended only a few months before the composition of the poem.) The happy warrior is one "who comprehends his trust and to the same Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim," one "whose high endeavours are an inward light That makes the path before him always bright," one "who makes his moral being his chief care." Though his powers give him a peculiar grace in common strife—life's mild ordinary concerns—, he "is happy as lover; and attired With sudden brightness like a man inspired" when he is called upon to "face some awful moment to which Heaven has joined Great issues, good or bad for human kind." (Here Prince Hal could step into the portrait when he rallies to the danger of civil war and, as "full of spirit as the month of May" and gallantly armed, he "rises from the ground like feathered Mercury" and gallops forth to defeat Hotspur.) The happy warrior never becomes callous to human suffering because of exposure to bloodshed and all the "miserable train" of war; because of the exposure he becomes "more alive to tenderness." He possesses the Anglo-Saxon reverence for law and order, and "through the heat of conflict keeps the law in calmness made"; and reason remains his guide at all times. And, virtue even more English, "though endued as with a sense And faculty for storm and turbulence," he is yet "a soul whose master bias leans to homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes." Into those words are woven the heartbreak and sacrifice of numberless young men who have today been turned from ordinary pursuits to withstand hordes whose master bias leans to warlike scenes. But the happy warrior can accept either "a toward or an untoward lot" and continue to play "in the many games of life that one Where what he most doth value must be won." As he nears the end, he "finds comfort in himself

and in his cause" and draws his last breath in "confidence of Heaven's applause." "This," says Wordsworth, is He that every man in arms should wish to be."

That person would be daring who would undertake to estimate the influence this sketch may have had upon the great military figures of the century and more since it was written. I have more than once heard admirers of General Lee comment upon the exactness with which he is characterized in the portrait; and certainly he fits into it in almost every detail. I wonder if any biographer knows whether or not he was definitely influenced by the poem. A high British officer is said to have distributed copies of the poem in the Crimea before a battle because he thought it better suited to the hour than the pious tracts customarily distributed. He would be a daring person who would undertake to estimate the influence the poem may now be having upon the destiny of the world—and this despite the fact that some American students are said to have looked askance upon the poem in the years when certain college groups were cultivating an indiscriminate pacificism.

In reading this poem and other war poetry of Wordsworth, one is likely to realize, and should do so, that the poet's acquaintance with heroic figures and with war was by no means merely academic. Much of the ideal warrior or patriot was modeled after his sea captain brother, who had gone down with his ship only a few months before the composition of the poem. Moreover, Wordsworth had not only been able to watch from afar the battles of Nelson and Napoleon, and brood over military heroism and genius as well as over military ruthlessness; Wordsworth had, in the heyday of his youth, been in the midst of the French Revolution and had been intimate with one of its greatest soldiers. He had realized at once how impossible it was for history's page to reveal what really took place in such times—had offered "laughter to the page that would reflect To future times the face of what now is." One year to the day of the storming of the Bastille, Wordsworth had travelled across France with French peasants returning from witnessing the king swear allegiance to the new

constitution of France. After finishing Cambridge, he had returned to France in the fall of 1791 for a stay of more than a year. During that time he passed from what he calls the indifference of one who enters the theatre when the action is too far advanced for him to get the drift, to a realization that France was "standing on the top of golden hours And human nature seeming born again," the feeling that "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven!" Day by day he had seen the roads crowded "with the bravest youths of France And all the promptest of her spirits linked in gallant soldiership." He had visited "each spot of old or recent fame, The latter chiefly; from the field of Mars Down to the suburb of St. Antony, And from Mont Martre southward to the Dome of Genevieve." He had seen in "both her clamorous Halls, the National Synod and the Jacobins . . . the Revolutionary Power toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms." He had stared at and listened to "Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild! And hissing factionists with ardent eyes. . . . Not a look Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear is forced to wear But seemed there present." He had scanned them all, "watched every gesture uncontrollable, Of anger and vexation, and despite." The poet finally caught the drift and developed faith that "if France prospered, good men would not long pay fruitless worship to humanity."

In this passage of his soul from apathy to ecstasy for a great cause, Wordsworth was under direct guidance of one of the noblest soldiers participating in the Revolution, Michel Beaupuis, a member of the aristocracy who had embraced the cause of the people—"Let his name stand with the worthiest of Antiquity," the poet begs. And Wordsworth realized that, though "sweet is is, in academic groves . . . To ruminate with interchange of talk On rational liberty, and hope in man, Justice and peace . . . far more sweet such toil if nature then be standing on the brink of some great trial, and we hear the voice Of one devoted—one whom circumstance Hath called upon to embody his deep sense In action, give it outwardly a shape And that a benediction to the world. Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth,—A hope it is, and a

desire; a creed of zeal, by an authority Divine Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death." The intercourse between himself and Beaupuis, Wordsworth likened to that of Dion and Plato, and spoke of a "philosophic war led by philosophers." However that may be, not perhaps since Aeschylus fought in the Battle of Marathon and Sophocles went forth a general under Pericles has there been anything in literary history comparable to Wordsworth's experience with the French Revolution—no experience by a poet of his powers, that is, with war or national madness or pivotal moments in human liberty. The Civil War to which Milton contributed his pen afforded no such soul-shaking experiences to him. Goethe's glimpse of the French struggle as he watched his Prussians defeated at Valmy brought no real insight into the great cause such as the young Wordsworth gained. Certainly no poet has ever given such expression to such experiences as Wordsworth has given in *The Prelude* to his experience in France.

The spiritual exhilaration with which Wordsworth finally comprehended the great upheaval in France was, however, doomed to short duration. Just as he was ready to undertake "for a cause so great service however dangerous," his anxious and unsympathetic guardians withdrew his funds. As there was always in him a good streak of his practical country lawyer father, the young poet returned to England and thereby, no doubt, saved his head. For some time he retained his faith in the French people, was even willing to overlook "the dire work of massacre" as something that could "show itself, then die, not to occur again." He continued to give his hope to the French cause even after French leaders had "plucked up mercy by the roots." As England soon after moved to war "against French liberty," Wordsworth passed through the conflict of sensations already described, a conflict such as many fine-grained Englishmen no doubt passed through when their government dropped Haile Selassie at Geneva and signed the pact at Munich. Then as Wordsworth watched "the crimes of few spread into madness of the many" in France, and realized that "Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence" for one of conquest, "Losing sight of all which they had struggled

for," he sank into a soul-sickness in which he "lost all feeling of conviction . . . and wearied with contrarieties, yielded up moral questions in despair." This was "the crisis of that strong disease, This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped, Deeming our blessed reason of least use Where wanted most." This almost complete spiritual collapse should bring Wordsworth close to a generation that has had to go through a fire baptism to find its soul. Coming in the wake of a war to end war, a war to make the world safe for democracy, most of the young men now fighting with the United Nations were fed upon the futility of war and led to believe that there would never again be such universal madness as was the last war, only to find themselves drawn into an angrier maelstrom than the world had seen before. Wordsworth's youth offered just such bewildering vacillation.

Then at length came recovery from the soul-sickness. Gradually the young poet was led back to those "sweet counsels between heart and head." He heard once more "the still, sad music of humanity," no longer "harsh nor grating, though of ample power to chasten and subdue." "The hiding places of Man's power" opened before him. He saw the spring return and felt the presence that disturbed him with the "joy of elevated thoughts." Finally, he arrived at the "cheerful faith that all which we behold is full of blessing," that "a gracious spirit o'er this Earth presides and o'er the heart of man." He found a "comfort in the strength of love." He discovered that though "Suffering is permanent, obscure, and dark, And has the nature of infinity, Yet through the darkness . . . gracious openings lie By which the soul . . . may pass in hope." It is doubtful that many in our generation will find openings of the passage to hope where they began for Wordsworth. For him they began in associations with "the presences of Nature in the sky and on the earth," in "visions of the hill," and "souls of lonely places." It is possible, however, that many persons now worn down with "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world" may find in Wordsworth's poetry, particularly that in which he traces his recovery from his great spiritual crisis, what John

Stuart Mill claimed he found in it during a dark personal crisis—"What will be the perennial sources of our happiness when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed."

So much for the individual import of Wordsworth's poetry for this generation. There is in much of his poetry, also, general and particular significance for the period of turmoil that is to usher in the century of the common man. No other poet has ever proclaimed so powerfully as did Wordsworth the essential dignity of the common man, the high spiritual heritage of the lowly. It was not until Beaupuis had convinced Wordsworth that the French Revolution was for the down-trodden that he thrilled to it. Turning in boredom from "societies Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed," he sought the companionship of Beaupuis. Then came a momentous walk when they "chanced to meet a hunger-bitten girl Who crept along fitting her languid gait unto a heifer's motion by a cord Tied to her arm . . . the girl with pallid hand was busy knitting in a heartless mood of solitude." At the sight Beaupuis "in agitation said, 'Tis against *that* that we are fighting." All at once the poet caught the drift, felt that "a benignant cause was abroad which might not be withstood," saw "poverty such as that forever banished," and visioned "finally as sun and crown of all . . . the people having a strong hand In framing their own laws; whence better days To all mankind. . . ."

But it was not alone the French Revolution that turned Wordsworth to lowly man. Early in his boyhood, surrounded by sturdy mountaineers who felt subservience only "to presences of God's mysterious power made manifest in Nature's sovereignty," he had realized "How oft high service is performed within, when all the external man is rude in show, Not like a temple rich in pomp and gold But a mere mountain chapel that protects Its simple worshippers from sun and shower." As he, "a rambling schoolboy," came suddenly at times upon a mountain shepherd distant a few steps, "in size a giant, stalking through thick fog, His sheep like Greenland bears . . ." or watched him step "beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow" to be "glorified by

the deep radiance of the setting sun," or descried him "in distant sky, a solitary object and sublime, Above all height! like an aerial cross Stationed alone upon a spiry rock Of the Chartreuse for worship"—as he thus early in life saw "man ennobled outwardly" before his sight, saw him in Aeschylean grandeur, so he early came to "a love and reverence of human nature." Beginning at the end of a century when the poets regarded as major by their contemporaries introduced lowly persons, especially rustics, only for ridicule or other humorous treatment, Wordsworth turned to the simple person who inhabited his mountains, caught a fundamental dignity in many of them, brooded over it, and determined early that his theme should be "no other than the heart of man as found among the best that lived" (by which he meant those who lived remote from "the fretful stir unprofitable" and matured in the presence of nature), resolved "to follow with no timid step, "daring" to tread this holy ground, speaking no dreams, but things oracular." In keeping this vow, Wordsworth sounded in a way unparalleled in secular literature the essential dignity of the lowly and the basic spiritual dignity of common man. Furthermore, as his imagination interprets them, many of the lowly about him are transformed into timeless, enduring figures. They seem as ancient and as everlasting as the hills they inhabit. Wordsworth's shepherds have been called fragments of the landscape, and Michael does seem a fragment of some lofty cliff. And, though there is a strangely modern tang to his experience, with the incident of the defaulted bond and the country lad going astray in the city, Michael himself seems older than the shepherds who journeyed to Bethlehem: there is a rugged Old Testament tone in him. Likewise, the old Cumberland beggar, travelling on, "a solitary man . . . Bowbent, his eyes forever on the ground . . . one little span of earth all his prospect," seems to come as far from out the past and to go on as endlessly into the future as does the figure of the Wandering Jew that so haunted the imagination of the Romantic poets. The gentle-mannered old leechgather becomes before the poet's eyes—and the reader's—like someone from a far region sent to give

him human strength; and the poet adds: "In my mind's eye, I seemed to see him pace About the weary moors continually, Wandering about alone and silently." Margaret, deserted by her husband after sickness and bad-crop years forced him to slip away and join a regiment of soldiers, seems eternally to peer into the faces of strangers as she roams about her ruined cottage. "'Tis a common tale," says the poet, "an ordinary sorrow of man's life." So are all Wordsworth's tales, "unenriched with strange events," containing "no moving accident to freeze the blood." But the poet illumines ordinary sorrow so as to bring it poignantly home, so as to throw a halo of significance around ordinary man. His heroes, his ideal woman, his ideal poet, as well as his ideal warrior, are not persons who dwell apart; they are not too good for human's nature's daily food. They must make their flights into the spirit world, have moments when they "see into the life of things"; yet they are all types of "the wise, who soar, but never roam, True to the kindred points of Heaven and home." They do not flee to some isle of Eden, some Utopia, as do Shelley's aspirants after truth: they work out their destiny in "the very world, which is the world Of all of us,—the place where in the end, We find our happiness, or not at all!" This practical idealism, combined with rare insight into, and deep respect for, lowly man gives particular value to Wordsworth's poetry today. Every thoughtful person realizes that the world revolution now in progress involves far more permanent human problems than Hitler's appalling atrocities to minority groups and conquered peoples. Wordsworth's poetry seems an excellent literary antidote for the external and cold patronage and the condescending paternalism that have so frequently marked twentieth century acceptance of the lowly. In fact, I dare assert that the reaction against the romantic idealists in favor of the robust realists of the eighteenth century, so noticeable in English curricula since the last war, has been too sweeping and by no means entirely salutary.

It is almost a century now since Matthew Arnold asked: ". . . Where will Europe's latter hour Again find Wordsworth's healing

power?" No one would dare suggest that Wordsworth could heal, that any or all poets could heal, the wounds which have been dealt to Europe and other parts of the world in the last few years. Yet the poet who saw the vision splendid fade almost entirely into the light of common day as he came face to face with a world which seems a strangely exact miniature of our world, and who then in nature found a counterpoise and felt hope grow strong again; the poet who discovered "present good in life's familiar face" and recognized "all the sacred claims and heaven descended rights of common man;" who acknowledged "one great society alone on earth, the noble living and the noble dead"; the poet who hurled defiance at the enemies of freedom in timeless phrases—that poet seems peculiarly fashioned for these our times. Of such a poet in such a world at such an hour as this England and all of us have need.

by John S. Marshall

RICHARD HOOKER AND THE ANGLO-SAXON IDEAL

THE foundation stones of our civilization are sure; it is only the superstructure that sways: that is our consolation and our unyielding hope. The groundwork of our ancient and traditional culture is the bedrock of reality itself discovered in experience and revealed in history. Strange as it may seem to most Englishmen and Americans we do have an abiding faith, and our lives are built like houses upon the rock, and not upon the sand. In this sense we are not only ethical, but also metaphysical. We have erected our civilization on reality and the reality of Nature and Nature's God is our steadfast confidence and sure defense. Of course, such facts are latent and are seldom brought to light; but our practical achievements do rest upon them and without such a substratum of true being would be impossible.

A few years ago I tried the experiment of writing an ethics from the point of view of the Anglo-Saxon mind. This was an attempt to discover the character of our actual ethical ideals. After I had finished the analysis and had organized it into a system, I had the good fortune to read portions of Dr. DuBose's exposition of the fundamentals of natural ethics. I was delighted to find that his ethics and mine were in striking agreement. DuBose presents us with a morality based on the Anglo-Saxon and Christian Aristotle, but his conclusions were broadly the same as those that are obtained from an independent analysis of our cultural ideals.

The poetic version of this conception is to be found in Shakespeare, its political forms are manifest in Burke and Winston Churchill, but its philosophical form is not so manifest. Ethical writers are numerous, but a thinker that reveals the reality behind

our morality, of him we hear little even amongst the philosophers. Bacon does not bring it to light, for he is too Utilitarian; Locke does not because he is too much of a revolutionary; William James does not because he hates the gentleman.

We have failed to find the philosopher of our higher civilization, the philosopher of our ideals, because we have not sought him where he was to be found, engaged in the task of defending the Elizabethan achievement in its abiding and philosophical aspects. The great analyst of the achievements of his time became the man who discovered the metaphysics, the realization of reality that lay below the achievements of literature, political adjustment, and religious reformation. Richard Hooker wrote of Ecclesiastical Polity, and of the political settlement of the relations of Church and State, but in solving the problems that lay before him, he discovered the philosophy that supported such a life, such a Church, such a government, a philosophy that revealed a reality deeper than that literature, that Church, that State.

Hooker was not only a great stylist, a great exponent of ecclesiastical polity, a profound theologian, he was also the philosopher of our civilization, the thinker who revealed the ontology of our achievements and the foundations on which they rest. Hooker is so much a part of us that we have forgotten him, yet he must be examined again if we are to understand of what sort of people we are and on what foundations of civilization is built.

The fact that Hooker is an essentially Anglo-Saxon genius, that he is an exponent of the modern mind of the English and the American means that he is not merely the defender of the institutions and practices of the Middle Ages. This is to be remembered now that we recognize the continuity of much in Hooker's thought with the ancient Church and older civilization. D'Entreves has done us invaluable service in bringing to light the fact that Hooker is Janus-faced, that he is related to the Middle Ages and looks back upon them as well as forward to the modern world. He is modern but is not merely modern; that is his genius. But that too is the genius of all truly Anglo-Saxon culture.

How often the defenders of liberty have made their defense by using the tools and some of the methods of attack inherited from the Middle Ages. Their very defense has been protection of our institutions from the dangers of extreme modernism. That is the essential character of the English mind. Thus the ancient constitution, the judiciary, and the High Court of Parliament were used by Chief Justice Coke to check the essentially novel and highly innovating experiments of the Stuarts. The ancient rights of the judiciary were used to defend the individual against the tyranny of majorities in the period of American history that followed the Revolution. Hooker takes the ancient conceptions of Aquinas and the Greek Fathers and reveals their relevance for the new age. He bringeth forth out of his treasures things new and old and the result is that curious balance and moderation that makes him the English philosopher *par excellence*.

I. NATURAL LAW AND HUMAN JUSTICE

Hooker took over the conception of natural law from the system of St. Thomas, revitalized it, and made it the basis of his new system of philosophy. Aristotle, St. Thomas, and the Greek Fathers all aided him; but the interpretation is his own. Hooker was learned, but his eyes were not merely cast back upon the great classics of philosophy and theology. As he met the practical problem of refuting the Puritan theory that nature is evil and that structure of our world is not of God, but is a result of sin, Hooker reasserted the divine origin of the laws of nature and their essential importance for human life and justice.

There is a happy blend of elements in his thought that frees him from mediaeval formalism and vitalizes his philosophy with the new yeast of the Renaissance spirit. It is the same spirit that animates the pastoral romances of Elizabethan literature, it is the new love of nature and of beauty and nobility of man and world about him. This was not simply the pastoralism of the Italians and French; it is a reassertion of the native English genius, a recognition of the beauty of hill and dale, a perception of the remedial and redemptive character of nature itself, and of

Nature's God. Shakespeare does recognize a deep mystery of evil in nature, but he knows no nature completely devoid of that love and sweetness which is so fundamental to the best in nature and to human life itself.

Hooker is like Shakespeare in many ways, and at no point is he more akin to his great dramatic contemporary than in his sympathy for the revelation of God in nature. Both believe that there is transcendent Deity beyond the realm of nature, and that there is an ultimate revelation of God in the Incarnation; but there is also a sweetness and beauty in nature and they are an echo, a lesser refrain of the majestic harmonies of heaven. Hooker like Shakespeare finds his first revelation of order and of goodness in the laws of nature; that is his foundation and his starting point. Then, he passes on to the higher types of law, the laws of the heavenly hosts and the laws of God's own nature.

There is a curse on human life, to be sure, but nature is not depraved and there is a law of human life that transcends the fall and is the handiwork of God Himself, the witness to the primitive perfection of the creation. This natural law is the basis for all human justice and all human effort. The fall of man only weakened the will but did not destroy the divinely created order in human life, a law implanted in man's nature, and a law of justice and equity. According to Hooker the Scriptures do not therefore contradict the laws of nature. The Scriptures assert the divine character of the laws of nature; but they also assert a law that is higher than natural law. This higher law, however, does not destroy, but only fulfills the law of nature. The Puritan knew no law for man except the law of God as made manifest in the Scriptures; Hooker believes in the God who made both the Heavens, and the earth, the God of natural and of supernatural law.

Latent in Hooker's notion of natural law is the fundamental English love for forest and field, and the Renaissance glorification of man, but this love of nature and this recognition of the wonder of man are free from all Machiavellianism, all reference to man as an autonomous creature, all magnification of man as a

fabulous being of self-will and power. In Machiavelli there is a rebellion against nature and against nature's God, and it is in protest of such insolence that Hooker asserts the glory of humility. We must recognize that man is dependent and needs the care of the Father in Heaven who notes even the sparrow's fall: Both Shakespeare and Hooker believe in Providence, the care of God over all nature; they believe in that concern and interest of the God for the whole of His created world.

This law of nature and this law for man in relation to God are not only a scientific law but the foundation for ethics. Man can destroy his own being; he can disfigure and render evil his own birthright and sell it for a mess of pottage. Human beings are free creatures; they can choose, and they can choose to their own destruction and even to the destruction of others. The law of ethics as Hooker understood it was the law of consequences, the law of results. The aim of life is happiness or the bliss of life well lived; but the wages of sin are death, or the destruction of all bliss. This law of consequences is the foundation of all ethics, the basis of all life as good or evil, and it stands as a firm rock on which morality ultimately rests.

The law of justice is a law of nature and of man; it is a law of consequences that comes to its moral focus in man. It is the compensatory, the corrective balance of nature; in man it is the law of distribution, the true balance of a natural economy, and of the ideal of order and true equity. This law of nature does not prevent injustice being done; it does not mean that error is frustrated. It means rather that the results of injustice are corruption and destruction, whereas the results of justice are health and normal happiness. The law of nature is the law of health and redemption, the *lex medicina naturae*, for the health of the world does not come from disease and cruelty, but from normality and justice, from righteousness and nobility.

The insights of Hooker are entirely free from cant and pious sentimentalism. There is a balance in life, a *quid pro quo* that is necessary for all normal human relationships. Hooker is an Aristotelian, but an Aristotelian who has remade his theories in

the form of the Gospels. Like Aristotle, and like our Lord, the concept of justice is primary. No appeal to Diety, no ecclesiastical sanction, can free us from the fundamental need for fair play, from the fundamental obligation of true honor. Christianity to be sure involves more than justice and more than honor, but it never falls below either of these and can only be true when it builds upon these fundamental moral principles. Our God sends His rain upon all alike, for He is a God of Justice, and we can only be the children of God as we too are men of justice and men of honor, persons who are responsible and persons who are it builds upon these fundamental moral principles. Our God kind as only the noble can be kind.

II. MAN AND HIS GOD

There is a law of nature and there are laws for that which is above nature. Even God Himself is governed by the law of His own Being, the Law of his Eternal Nature. Man and Nature belong to the realm that lies below the Heavenly Order; but the supernatural realm is guided by its own law, for Hooker considers reality to be hierarchical, a graded system of beings with God as the highest reality in the series and each level of the series governed by its own character and laws. The heavenly realm and God Himself are governed by their laws just as the earth is governed by its laws.

That does not mean that God is merely a mechanical center of law and energy, since His Nature is that of Reason and Love, and has the freedom that only Reason and Love can give. Reason is the guide of His energy, and Love is the outpouring of His Life in the Creation and in the Preservation of that world which He has created. Since the law of God's Being is Reason, His is a living, creative Activity, and by His very Character cannot be blind and mechanical. That is the reason that God is the Governor and Guide of the Universe, the Source of its vital natural law, its Character and Determination. God is the source of natural law because He is by nature Eternal Reason and Eternal and Everlasting Love.

Hooker is not only an Aristotelian, he is also a Platonist; and he is not only a Platonist, he is also a Biblical thinker. The Biblical phase of his thinking has the ascendancy over all other constituents of his thought, and it modifies and transfigures his Aristotelianism and Platonism. For example, Aristotle thought of the universe as a finished thing with all change as a merely circular motion. History always repeats itself; it is the recurrence time after time of the same things in the same way. Hence there are no new types in history, no really new factors. The Biblical conception is utterly different from Aristotle's in its attitude towards history and its meaning. The Bible treats novelty as the very stuff of the story of the life of mankind, the story of man struggling with his destiny and failing over and over again to reach the goal that ultimately is within his reach. In the movement of history God corrects and emends, shapes and reshapes our ends for us. This same Biblical conception which Hooker formulates comes to graphic expression in Raleigh's *History of the World*, and in our age in Winston Churchill's is a rhythm in history, the periodicity of the action of God in *World Crisis*. For Hooker, for Raleigh, and for Churchill there is a rhythm in history, the periodicity of the action of God in His influence upon the world. This is not a cyclic activity but a counterbalancing action, a remedial correction of the extremities of human action. God is impartial in His justice and brings rewards to both good and evil in the long story of states and empires.

We may choose to ignore this fact in human history and then human injustice takes the place of justice and inequity takes the place of equity. Then we are in a wrong relationship to God although He is in a right relationship to us. We may weaken our right relationship to Him with disastrous results for us and for others, but God is never in a wrong relationship to us, for even when our relationship is wrong His relationship to us is corrective and remedial. For this reason, even God Himself does not prevent waste in history, even He only corrects and redeems and does not annihilate our wills and activities. In the long run God does triumph, but not without waste and loss; this is the

tragedy of redemption. God corrects injustice, but he does not destroy all evil as it is performed. Thus there is loss and tragedy in the world, and injustice produces disaster and waste.

Our relationship to God is a unique relationship, that of the child to his Heavenly Father, the Subject to His King, the Creature to His Creator. God is Supreme and we are related to Him as those who are dependant upon Him and upon His loving kindness and tender mercy. This is the source of Hooker's dislike of pride, and his firm conviction that true humility is the truest nobility. Pride is the feeling by the creature that he is the equal of his Creator, the exaltation of the earthly son over his Heavenly Father, the assumption of the creature that he is as great as his Creator. Such arrogance leads to the worst cruelties and brutalities, for when filled with overbearing pride a man feels responsibility neither to God nor to his fellow man.

We are at our best when we look askance at vaunting pride and high ambition. We need self-respect, of course, since a proper regard for ourselves gives us courage to aspire and to hope for the best in ourselves; but as subjects of the Most High, there is need of recognition of honor where honor is due, and a feeling of awe and reverence for the dispositions of the Divine Providence. From Raleigh and Sidney to Lee and Churchill, the Anglo-Saxon gentleman has felt a sense of humility in the presence of the dispositions of God, and has abhorred arrogance and insolence as the deepest evils of human life. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and so all true estimates of our own worth should be tempered with humility.

III. THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

Thus far we have seen Hooker as an exponent of the law of nature and the law of man, the law of angels and the law of God's own nature. This is the hierarchy of law, the graded series of reality with material objects at the bottom of the series and God as the Supreme Being at the top of the series. Man is thus separated from God and only touches Him as Providence shapes the character of history; but there is an hiatus between God and

man. If this chasm between man and God had been left unbridged there would have been danger of Hooker's conception developing into a humanism not unlike that of the Renaissance Platonists and Aristotelians. Hooker, however, did not leave his scheme of hierarchical realism in any such state; he developed his conception of Providence in terms of the Incarnation, and he conceived the Incarnation in terms of the Mediatorship of Jesus Christ. The limitations of the hierarchy are transcended by breaking down of the wall of partition between God and man.

Our Lord Jesus Christ as both God and Man unites within Himself that which is otherwise separated. Thus Manhood and Godhead are joined without fusion in the Person of Our Lord, and Man through the Mediator is united with the Deity, and so through the God-Man there is a direct contact between man and God in History. The Providence of God is thus not the disposition of the affairs of the world by God Transcendent; it is the Providence of God through the Mediation of Jesus Christ. It is God closely united with humanity, it is God mediated through Jesus Christ as governor of the world.

Behind this theology was the wise Elizabethan, a philosopher who was taking history seriously. Often Hooker and his disciples misread the chronicles of human events, but they were convinced that history had a meaning and that its meaning was to be found in the Gospels. Hooker did not develop this conception and did not see its full implication in the interpretation of history. Even the past hundred years has only begun to appreciate its significance. F. D. Maurice led the way, Bishop Westcott used the same path and now Archbishop Temple follows with a suggestion of its fuller use. Prime Minister Churchill uses certain of the conceptions of Hooker in his *World Crisis*, but his method is more nearly that of the Old Testament than of the New. However, Churchill does have a sense of redemptive sacrifice and of the solidarity of world history, and he does believe in the revelation of the Gospels. Over and over again these Christian conceptions furnish him with the insights that make his historical writings so brilliant and so accurate.

This conception of history is realistic rather than ideological, it is a recognition of the concrete realities of life with no taint of abstractness and formalism. We must never distort history into a theory or remake it according to a pattern; we must see it as it is and find its meaning in that unique union of Man with God found in the life of Jesus Christ.

IV. GOD AND THE LIFE OF THE NATION

The importance of this theory of God's relation to history is the source of Hooker's conception of political history and his philosophy of government. He believes that Christ is the Head not only of the Church, but of the State. So, just as the Church is sanctified by its corporate life as the Body of Christ, so the Nation, if true to Him, is sanctified by His Kingship over it. Thus does the Elizabethan philosopher and theologian find the meaning of the newly discovered national state. Hooker not only believes that the laws of nature are God's creation and are God's law for us but he recognizes the natural value of the state under God's governance because he believes that Jesus Christ is not only the great Bishop of the Church, He is the Lord over Nations.

This theory of the dual role of Jesus Christ has exercised an important place in Anglo-American political doctrine, for it is the source of the conception of the Christian Republic, the dream of the Christian Nation. Hooker thought that the limits of Church and State should be exactly the same, and that every Member of the Church should be a Subject of the State, and every Subject should be a Communicant of the Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ would thus be made supreme in both Church and State. This Elizabethan dream has never been realized but it still exercises an influence over us, for although it has not been actualized in practice it has given the state sanctity in our eyes, and has caused us to realize that not only the Church may reveal the Divine will, but the nation may also have a place in the Divine economy and a place that is not derivative from that of the Church. There are two aspects of God's rule over man, the Church and the State. Governments are under God's rule

and in the Divine economy, the State is parallel to the Church and not subordinate to it.

Hooker's objection to the Latin Church lay in the fact that it places a Bishop over all secular governments and thus destroys the independence of the State. In principle therefore Hooker believes in the Branch Theory of the Church, for it allows the national state to develop a separate regional life of its own. Hooker is the exponent of the regional theory of the Universal Church and also of the State as the agent of national or regional civilization. This conception of Christianization of the world which he presents still penetrates our mind. Perfect it may not be but it has developed the best phases of our Anglo-Saxon civilization.

We, like Hooker, still believe in the right of peoples to new areas of national thought and life. Thus the United States of America developed as a separate nation, with its own ethos and its own ecclesiastical life, and in due time the ancient English Church gave the new nation the Apostolically ordained Episcopate and blessed the new Church in the new nation. One by one the new nations of the British Empire acquired national autonomy, and as each did it developed its own national Anglican Church and its own rites and ceremonies. And not only have the Anglicans done this, but the Nonconformists have shown the same characteristics and now we have in Canada and India the tendency to create national united Churches that attempt to include all Christians in one national body.

This solution of the problem of the Divine Governance of the world and the relation of Church and state may have been conceived too simply by Hooker. We today may be constrained to interpret God's relationship to the world much more complexly. But we too believe in the Divine Providence in the life of men, we too believe that the State must be Christianized through the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We too believe that the redemption of man is not only through the Church by itself but by a Civilization under the dominion of Jesus Christ our Lord. The worth of the natural life and the sanctity of its general character is an integral part of the Christian ideal. The love of nature as God's creation

of beauty, the recognition of the implicit worth of man, the conception of the Nation of a bearer of Christian civilization, the ideal of the Church as the Body of Christ, these are the basis of an ideal that has helped to give us the finest that our civilization has had to offer to us and to the rest of mankind.

EVOLUTION ANNO DOMINI

Life's double meaning, single to the heart,
Like good and evil in the eye of God
Who made the riddle but will take no part,
Nor grant an answer while we lack the art,
Leaving to Nature the precept and the rod—
Life's meaning, unified by love,
Double and dark beneath the cold-eyed fact,
Single in light burning high above,
Life's meaning is the *secret* of the pact
Between our evil and our good.

Love, the Interpreter, moves between
Things darkly visible and things unseen,
Looks through this Nature in its double mold,
This fire and water, hot and cold,
Our life and death, our hope and fear,
Death with its there, life with its here,
The changing new and the unceasing old.
What do the fluent meanings mean,
Of things visible to things unseen,
The less, the more, the near, the far,
This pleasant strand and the other shore,
Our war for peace, our peace for war—
When shall time's alternation cease,
And things that are not be the things that are?

Is life imprisoned in its form of change,
With love and hate to mark the range,
Love without hate unnatural and strange?
The laws of death, are they the doom,
Love's anxious day in their narrow room,
Our birth for freedom death on freedom's tomb?

These grim comparisons, our dread surmise,
Shall lose their force as love looks through,
Sets fair her course and pointing onward cries:
I am the way, the long dark way through you!
No other answer stands upon the skies,
I am life's way, and I alone am free.
In life and death, in hope and fear,
Through fire and water, hot and cold,
New, old, truth, lies,
I am both *there* and *here*—
Follow thou me!

by R. A. Rice

MORTAL WITNESS

(EUROPE 1939—)

I

Kennst du das Land—
where under night the orange burns,
and climbs the terraced hill,
within the earth puts out its web to life:
Kennst du, kennst du das Land?

In a land
hear Rachel weeping in the heart:
Between us and between, the myriad veins,
in like assault, declare our fate.
Friends go out in the listening dawn,
meet and define the clear noon's thunder,
embrace the enraptured thunderer
beneath these shattered terraces.

See the acid fire corrode
the silver trumpets of a holy pain
and under us time's meaning turn
in broken fact,
the act dissolving in the blood,
the porous rock.

Weep, Mother in the land.

II

Before a wall of time and space—
unfinished tale and morbid wood—
lovers who weep
and minds whose words are blood
are stood.

Before them lies the open pit,
a freedom that unready tongue must greet—
which would be crying out to flesh
the end of acts fear's gods permit:
a bullet's dispossession of the heart,
this fate tangential.

Can the saffron pit inscribe
full mortal witness of the frame,
the thought diffused,
the blood defamed—
of lovers,
saints,
and token men?

III

What can you say to the jointless night—
sheath of steel for hostage stars—
cold,
as hands are cold to hands
for all their urgent pantomime:
What can you say to the jointless night,
creature of movements
and defeat?

O say to the night—
You cannot know,
you cannot feel:
Say to the night—
I bend and break,
give to the world its sentiment:
Say to the night—
I am heart to heart.

Under the helmet of jointless night
a last nerve throbs to a liquid dawn:
what can you alter
after night?

by Howard Carroll

by A. R. Fulton

EXPRESSIONISM—TWENTY YEARS AFTER

THROUGHOUT the extensive and diverse criticism of Thornton Wilder's play *The Skin of Our Teeth* a particular word has been signally absent. That word is *expressionism*. Whether as opinion on the one hand has averred, *The Skin of Our Teeth* is merely obscure and pretentious, or whether as Alexander Woollcott declared, it stands head and shoulders above anything ever written for our stage, or even whether it is a dramatization of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, the fact is that Mr. Wilder's play is highly indebted to that type of drama called expressionism, about which much was heard in the American theatre two decades ago. Although considerably less has been heard about expressionism since, its influence has been significant. It is not the purpose here to add to the voluminous criticism of *The Skin of Our Teeth*—although much of the controversy over the play could be resolved by an understanding of the technique Mr. Wilder therein employs—but rather to consider what contributions of expressionism to the American drama have made this kind of play possible.

The stage for expressionism was set, at the turn of the century, by Adolph Appia, Georg Fuchs, and Gordon Craig. Appia, who appreciated the mobility which the recently invented incandescent lamp made practicable in stage lighting, wrote *Music and the Scene*. Pointing out that light for the stage is of two kinds, flat light to illuminate and plastic light to cast shadows, he illustrated in his book the value of light not only in binding actor and setting together but also in expressing the meaning of the play. Ten years after the publication of *Music and the Scene*, Fuchs brought out his equally significant work, *The Revolution of the Theatre*. Whereas Appia's approach was through lighting, Fuchs based his theory on the proportions of the stage itself. Rejecting real-

ism, Fuchs held that unity in the theatre depends on a frank recognition of the theatric medium, the stage, which he would have shallow. A deep stage, he said, provides space for properties and other illustrative detail which distract from the actors. He contended that, since true perspective is impossible in the theatre anyway, the third dimension might as well be disregarded. Craig, too, would do away with the attempt to create on the stage the illusion of reality and instead would bring out the inner meaning of the play through suggestion. On a sheet of paper two inches square he said a line can be made to tower miles in the air, and he pointed out that the same can be done on the stage, for it is all a matter of proportion and has nothing to do with actuality. Although working separately and according to different theories, Appia, Fuchs, and Craig together helped to prepare the way for expressionism, for they were united in a single purpose—to bring out the meaning of the play.

Expressionism reached its height in Germany at the end of the First World War. The Treaty of Versailles having left Germany broken socially as well as economically, change was inevitable. In the arts the change, accelerated by Freudian psychology and the psychoanalytic spirit of the times, was expressed by a broadening application of philosophical thought to everyday life. In the drama exponents of the movement were young playwrights whom the war had left pacifists and mystics, or skeptics. Seeing in the troubled world about them a confirmation of their ideas—a confirmation expressed in a revolt against conventions and concepts previously held as truths—they expressed these ideas in their work. Man was to be the means for effecting the destruction of the old order—Man vs. Society. In expressionistic plays, Man is the hero.

In the United States the expressionistic movement was felt soon after it came to its heights in Germany. But whether because the revolt in this country, as evidenced in the feverish twenties, was less intense, or because American dramatists experimenting in expressionistic forms tended to copy some of the manifestations of German expressionism without catching

its spirit, or because they saw these manifestations only as devices to be subordinated to realism and intentionally rejected the rest—whatever the reason, when the movement subsided, it left in the American drama only a handful of plays essentially expressionistic. Outstanding among these are Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* (1922), John Howard Lawson's *Roger Bloomer* (1923) and *Processional* (1925), Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923), John Dos Passos' *The Moon Is a Gong* (1925), and Francis Edward Faragoh's *Pinwheel* (1927). Although much of the critical attack against these plays may have been justified, the purposes of the plays admitted of fulfillment through dramatic treatment, and the means by which the purposes were fulfilled contributed more to the American drama than the criticism implied.

Expressionism is the result of the artist's attempt to express himself more intensely than his medium permits—or rather, more intensely than it permitted in realistic forms. The expression, though highly subjective, is also an intense expression of the artist's experience. In painting and sculpture the expressionistic is concerned with the artist, the object being only a means. The principle applies to architecture too. When over half a century ago Louis Sullivan declared that "form must follow function," he presaged the expressionistic in architecture. Expressionism in literature, as in the arts of design, springs from the artist's attempt to express himself more intensely than the conventional forms of composition would seem to allow, as for example, in the stream-of-consciousness style suggested in William McFee's *Syncopating to Philadelphia* and carried to extremes in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

The solution which the expressionists found was to overstep the media. The result is distortion. Distortion is, of course, not peculiar to expressionism, for distortion is characteristic of all art. But whereas in pre-expressionistic art distortion was essentially incidental, in expressionism distortion is frankly emphasized. Distortion, for example, in expressionistic painting comes about not only through the painter's recognition of his medium but also

through his expression of it. Instead of attempting, as the realistic painter does, to suggest depth, the expressionistic painter emphasizes the two-dimensionality of his canvas and thereby expresses the canvas itself, or the paint, by emphasizing its thickness. In sculpture, too, the distortion is manifested by carving which brings out the heaviness and texture of the stone or the roughness of its surface. The development of expressionistic architecture follows a similar pattern. Comparable to realism in painting and sculpture is imitation in architecture. Although it might be held that the symmetry in the Greek megaron or the incompleteness of the Gothic cathedral is expressionistic, the architects of the last century were only imitators when they built Gothic railway stations or plastered Greek columns onto skyscrapers. But in following function with form the architect not only refrains from attempting to conceal his medium but is expressive in emphasizing it. Expressionism in literature, as in the visual arts, is characterized by a new emphasis on medium. The meaning of literature being words, the recognition of that medium would be obvious; the writer could hardly conceal it. But, for example, in much of the writing of Gertrude Stein, the medium is even expressed; it is similarly expressed in John Dos Passos' *42nd Parallel* and *1919*, in which sense experiences, exaggerated in the kaleidoscopic images of refracted nature flashes to the reader, are suggestive of expressionistic pictures.

Distortion in expressionism includes a frank emphasis on, and expression of, material. The dramatists who have been called expressionists tried to express in their plays ideas which they felt were not adaptable to the forms which had come to be accepted in the drama—including, of course, the theatre. The inadequacy of these forms to the dramatist's purpose is illustrated by Pirandello in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. In that play the author has created characters which exist definitely enough in his own mind, but he cannot project them identically to the audience, because the actors who are to represent them get in the way. The solution to the problem is to overstep the forms, which includes not only the words the dramatist writes but

the media of the theatre itself. These are "expressed" or, as it were, projected by distortion so that they stand out from the ordinary functions they have in realistic plays. It is the distortion that is responsible for much of the confusion regarding expressionism, even though the forms which the distortion takes are not so new as the criticism of expressionism in the drama implies. In fact, many of the forms antedate the term *expressionism*, which seems not to have been mentioned, in connection with any of the arts, before the twentieth century. Actually the distortions are only the manifestations of the essence of expressionism, that is, intensification of emotion. They are the result of extreme subjectivism. Considered objectively, expressionism is studied distortion to intensify emotion. From the point of view of the artist, however, the form originates in the intensification of emotion; the distortion is only the result.

The problem of the expressionistic playwright was to interpret this intensification through the media of the theatre. To solve his problem he distorted the media. Perhaps the reason that the expressionistic movement in the United States left us with few successful expressionistic plays is that dramatists, incited by the possibilities of modern staging, broke indiscriminately the long-established rules. All the rules may not have been essential. But when in circumventing the exacting requirements of the older dramaturgy, they fell into formlessness, they revealed a failure to distinguish between what is essential and what is not. What makes the first part of *The Adding Machine* better than the last part is that under the apparent formlessness of the first four scenes is a definite form—a clear image of Zero faced with the problem of the murky hell in which he is trapped—and of the last three only formlessness—a formless wandering in a formless world.

The final test of expressionism, as of any art, must be communicativeness, which depends upon similarity of experience of the dramatist and the spectator. Identical experience is not necessary, nor is it possible. Therefore the expressionist, whose material is frequently mental images presented in physical form, must distort the form no further than communicativeness permits.

If he would express himself, he must manifest the expression in communicative terms. Expressionism must not only express but communicate.

The forms of distortion through which it communicates are the manifestations of expressionism. One of the most common of these is the monodramatic. *Roger Bloomer*, for example, is a monodrama to the extent that the hero, Roger, as Lawson points out in the preface to the published text, is the most normal person in the play. The play is a kind of monologue—the monologue of Roger Bloomer. So too in *The Adding Machine* the world is presented, not objectively, but through the eyes of the protagonist, Mr. Zero. Thus to show the state of Zero's mind, for example, in the murder scene, Rice has the platform on which the office equipment stands revolve rapidly, and there is a cacophony of music and every offstage effect of the theatre, followed by a peal of thunder, a flash of red, and then blackness.

Roger Bloomer is an exception to most characters in expressionistic plays, in which characters are usually types—types sometimes carried to the extreme of abstractions. Recognizing that even in realism there is distortion, absolute imitation being impossible, the expressionistic playwright chose to express essential reality by this kind of distortion. But the difference is not so much of degree as of intent. The types may be indicated, as in *Pinwheel*, by generic names—the Jane, the Guy, the Lady Friend, etc. Or, as in *Roger Bloomer*, the type may be suggested by sound or association of names. Thus the fatuous politician and friend of Roger's father in Excelsior, Iowa, is Mr. Poppin, and the big business man in New York is Elliott T. Rumsey.

Expressionism has been defined as the "objectivization of the subjective." This definition, although hardly inclusive, is suggestive. For "the objectivization of the subjective" is symbolism, another expressionistic manifestation. The outer curtain for Act I of *Roger Bloomer* symbolizes the Midwest, just as the second-act outer curtain symbolizes New York. In *Pinwheel* the Guy's dream is symbolized by shadows moving on the wall above his bed. And in *The Hairy Ape*—the title itself is symbolic—the

uproar of sound in the forecandle of the liner, has, according to the stage direction at the beginning of Scene One, "a meaning—the bewildered, furious, baffled defiance of a beast in a cage." Of the many devices of the drama none adapts itself better to the purpose of the expressionist than symbolism. Again and again, by consciously using it, the expressionistic dramatists manifested through the media of the stage the intensified emotion they wished to express.

Various distortions of dialogue are also manifestations of expressionism. The distortion may take the form of a frank use of the aside and the soliloquy, or even a distortion of language itself. In *Roger Bloomer* a telegraphic style of language is suggested in parts of the dialogue. In *The Moon Is a Gong* the clipped lines of Part Two, Scene Two, are distorted into mere repetition of the one word "chatter." And in *The Hairy Ape* Yank's roar of rage at the end of Scene Three is picked up by the whistle "in a long, angry, insistent command." This kind of distortion suggests a form of ecstasy, evidenced particularly in the German expressionistic plays, in which emotion is sometimes intensified to inarticulate cries. Or the distortion may take the form of lyrical style, exemplified by poetic prose or even verse. Many of Roger Bloomer's speeches, particularly his soliloquies, are lyrical. Farago employs verse in *Pinwheel*, and some of the speeches in *The Moon Is a Gong* are almost sung.

It is not surprising that in attempting to intensify emotion, expressionistic dramatists should have utilized music. As composed for expressionistic plays music called for new modes and new ways of adapting particular orchestral instruments. The scene of the dream in *Roger Bloomer* is played "like a piece of very exciting music." The opening stage direction of *The Moon Is a Gong* is "The whole play is done to music." Music effectively intensifies emotion in *Pinwheel* and *Processional*. In *Pinwheel* the dialogue of Act I, Three is "actuated by the tempo of the music." When distorted, as it sometimes is, music expresses a medium. The enormous negro saxophone players in *Pinwheel* are the only musicians visible in the dance-hall scene, "although

a full jazz-band is heard all the while." The jazz-band in *Processional* is made up of nine men "playing on an incongruous assortment of instruments. . . . These do not keep time or tune very well." Typical of the stage directions pertaining to music in *Processional* are "The phonograph ends in a cracked wheeze," "In the dark a single blare of discordant music," and "There is a rhythmic frightened music at intervals."

Medium may be expressed by certain unrealistic uses of setting. Expressionism was coming to its height in Germany at a time when, because of the war, the building of elaborate sets in German theatres was forbidden. Whether because of this prohibition or because the expressionists saw in simple settings a way to express medium, the deviation from fourth-wall realism associated itself with the movement from the beginning and, with other expressionistic manifestations, was adopted by the American expressionists. *Pinwheel*, for example, was originally staged in a single set of two levels. Or the manifestation may take the form of abstraction, as evidenced in settings effected by curtains, screens, or drops. Hanging in folds, curtains suggest a plasticity without realism. And Gordon Craig having experimented with screens, the expressionists found his ideas particularly adaptable to their purpose of suggesting abstraction in backgrounds. *The Moon Is a Gong* was produced in Cambridge and Boston in 1925 in a permanent setting with tableau curtains and a series of drops at the back, and *Roger Bloomer* staged before curtains and a few painted drops was more successful than when staged realistically. Elaborately decorated scenery, outwardly unrelated to the play, only emphasizes itself and thus expresses medium. Some of the German plays were staged in old sets, elaborately decorated to represent realistic *mise en scènes*. The first stage direction in *Processional* specifies that the drop curtain for Act I be "like those in the older vaudeville theatres."

Appia had pointed out in *Music and the Scene* the possibilities of plastic light. Carrying Appia's idea further, the expressionists accentuated light and shadow to obtain arbitrarily unrealistic effects. In *Roger Bloomer* the shift in scene from the dining

room to the living room is made when the lights on stage left are turned down and those on stage right turned up. The bright ray of light at the end of the play, together with the opened door, symbolizes Roger's freedom. The Greenwich Village Theatre production of *Roger Bloomer*, which was lighted by a complicated arrangement of focussed spotlights, got interesting lighting effects in half lights, colors, and shadows.

Scenes in expressionistic plays fade kaleidoscopically into each other. In *Pinwheel* the dark room in the skyscraper fades into a dimly lit movie auditorium, and the scene at Coney Island merges into a dance hall. This manifestation, kaleidoscopic sequence, is evidenced in the great number of scenes in the plays, some of which are divided not into the conventional three or four acts but into "parts."

Expressionism is manifested in the theatre by a projection of the stage, from its conventional position behind the proscenium arch, to include the arch itself and even the auditorium. Thus theatrical illusion is broken down in a union of actors and audience symbolic of the dramatist's overstepping his medium. In *Roger Bloomer* the illusion is broken when in the scene on the prairie in Act I, "Eugene leans against the proscenium right" or when, in the same scene, Bloomer and Poppin "descend steps left into orchestra." In *Processional* the auditorium not only is "brilliantly lighted" throughout the first act, but is used again and again for part of the action. In *The Moon Is a Gong* action spreads out into the auditorium.

These are some of the familiar manifestations which distinguish expressionistic plays. There are many others, for once the playwright begins to distort his media variations become limitless. Often the technique is borrowed from vaudeville or musical comedy. When the Plain Clothes Man in *The Moon Is a Gong* "pulls open his coat with the regulation gesture, there is a drum roll and cymbal crash from the orchestra." As in musical comedy, music in expressionistic plays heightens content, and in some plays the union of music and content is distorted. Sounds are picked up and imitated by music, or vice versa. In the last scene

of *Pinwheel* "hammer blows come, the singing rhythm of labor, even vague strains of music, indefinite but pulsating, moving, gay." Characters are sometimes made up to look identical or to suggest the same person. The Judge in *Roger Bloomer* is suggestive of the College Examiner. In *The Moon Is a Gong* Uncle Amos is "exactly like Uncle William, followed by two sons with Arrow Collar faces"; the Housewives all look alike; and the Family Practitioner, the Man in Black Overalls, the Man in the Stovepipe Hat, and the Garbage Man are the same character.

Many of these manifestations are of course older than expressionism. Monodrama and abstract characters are exemplified in *Everyman*; type characters in the miracle plays and in the humor plays of Ben Jonson; symbolism proved an effective device for Strindberg and Ibsen; the soliloquy, the aside, and pantomime appeared in the drama almost at the beginning; painted drops have been a part of theatre equipment for two hundred years; and music, popular in the old melodrama, was the form for the tropes. Another expressionistic manifestation, the projection of the stage, is only a reversion to a much earlier way of staging. In the mystery plays Herod raged on the pageant "and in the street." Through the centuries the scene was gradually pushed back from the audience, until stage, scenery, and actors were neatly framed by the proscenium. The difference is that expressionistic playwrights use these devices studiously—to distort reality and thereby manifest essence and project the meaning of their plays. It is in total effect, though, rather than in specific juxtaposition of time, space, nature, and language that they intensify emotion and thus interpret rather than reproduce reality. If in mirroring life the expressionist does not make his startling image consistently distinct, the difficulty is one of handling the expressionistic devices rather than of misguided purpose. Kenneth Macgowan likened *Roger Bloomer* to "free verse poems of good quality read by actors in costume,"¹ contending that its materials are far above those of *The Adding Machine*, a more popular play. *Roger Bloomer* represents an attempt to convey

¹*Theatre Arts Monthly*, VII (July, 1923), 177.

what its author calls "the extraordinary poetry that lies in the common slang of the New York street."² Lawson says he endeavored to convey this "by a rhythm of American words and phrases as carefully schemed as the movement of music."³ If in doing so he wrote a less successful play than *The Adding Machine*, he at least did not fail to present American life in American terms. And unlike some other American playwrights who have experimented with expressionism, he wrote a play that is essentially expressionistic.

Although expressionistic plays may employ realistic devices, expressionism is inherently at the opposite pole from realism, which the expressionists found inadequate to their purpose. Since as originally conceived by the German expressionists and carried out in the expressionistic movement in the United States, expressionism rises from the attempt of the playwright to intensify emotion, plays which merely introduce distortions without the impelling expressionistic essence are not expressionistic plays. That the number of American plays which the movement produced is small does not, however, lessen the effect of expressionism on American drama. For, as pointed out, expressionism contributed through its manifestations rather than through its essence. This distinction and this contribution may be illustrated by three well-known American plays which have been called expressionistic—Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* (1920), Marc Connelly and George Kaufman's *Beggar on Horseback* (1924), and Connelly's *The Green Pastures* (1930)—but which are essentially realistic. Although in number of lines the expressionistic parts in all three of these plays exceed the realistic, the expressionistic parts are subordinate. In *Beggar on Horseback*, for example, the opening scene is quite realistic. There is nothing in that scene to suggest expressionism, in essence or in manifestations. The last scene of the play is similarly realistic. The dream, for which the realistic scenes are a frame, is the only expressionistic part of the play. But to present a dream on the stage in the realistic

²Letter "to the dramatic editor" (paper unnamed) dated March 18, 1923, Theatre Collection, Harvard University.

³*Ibid.*

style of stage production would not make the dream so credible as the method that Kaufman and Connelly hit on, for the distinguishing characteristic of dreams is distortion of reality. Recognizing in expressionistic devices the very way to make their dream dream-like, the authors use these devices in the dream part of their play. But the play, as represented by its realistic frame, is realistic. It is significant that throughout the presentation of the dream, the hero's piano and his easy chair remain where they were in the opening scene. O'Neill similarly uses expressionistic devices in *The Emperor Jones* to dramatize the inner conflict, which parallels the completely realistic attempt of Jones to escape from Lem and the natives. As in *Beggar on Horseback* the frame of the play—the opening and closing scenes—is realistic. Realism is shown too whenever Jones fires his gun and the apparitions vanish. And although the thump of the tom-tom is an expressionistic device, it represents throughout the scenes of Jones' visions the realism which frames them. In *The Green Pastures* expressionistic devices materialize on the stage the images in the minds of the Negroes, realistically presented in the opening scene and suggested in later parts when Paster Deshee's voice or the voices of the children in the Sunday School interrupt the expressionistic presentation of the Bible story. In these three plays expressionistic devices present more realistically than realistic ones could, respectively, a dream, a vision, and a naïve conception of Heaven.

O'Neill was one of the first American dramatists, if not the first, to incorporate expressionistic devices in plays. With the exception of Lawson, no other dramatist in this country has experimented so widely in the expressionistic form. While studying playwriting at Harvard, O'Neill learned German so that he could read the plays of Franz Wedekind, and he has said that the playwright he read especially was Strindberg. The influence of the father of expressionism was evidenced in O'Neill's work before expressionism became prominent in American drama. *The Hairy Ape*, though less conspicuously expressionistic than, for example, *Roger Bloomer*, anticipated in essence and manifesta-

tions the expressionistic pattern. Even if there had been no movement in this country, O'Neill undoubtedly would have gone on anyway to incorporate in his plays such expressionistic devices as the masks in *The Great God Brown* (1925) and *Lazarus Laughed* (1927) and the asides in *Strange Interlude* (1928). On the other hand, although O'Neill may be more indebted to the Germans and Strinberg than to American playwrights, the expressionistic movement in this country was not inimical to the reception of his plays and the means by which his ideas have been effected in the theatre. And O'Neill's success with expressionistic devices has of course only added to the contributions of expressionism to American drama. It is no coincidence that the manifestations of expressionism in O'Neill's plays represent those which remained in the drama after the expressionistic movement subsided.

Like O'Neill, Kaufman, and Connelly, other American playwrights, including Lawson, have incorporated expressionistic devices in plays not essentially expressionistic. Lawson's *The Pure in Heart* (1934), for example, includes kaleidoscopic sequence of scenes and music which underlines dialogue and intensifies emotion. In his "Notes on Production," prefacing the published version on his play *Winesburg, Ohio* (1937), Sherwood Anderson declares that after a good deal of experimenting it was found that the play seemed to gain a certain strength by great simplicity in stage settings. "There is a tremendous advantage," Anderson writes, "in having the scenes move forward rapidly, the shift being made in a few minutes while the theatre remains dark." expressionism is suggested not only in the settings but in the almost kaleidoscopic sequence by which they are bound together, a sequence emphasized by music, offstage voices, and the clattering of horses' hoofs, heard in the dark between scenes. Even in his naturalistic *Street Scene* (1929) Elmer Rice builds up a background of sound and people which suggests crowds in plays like *Pinwheel* and the phantasmagoria of racket at the climax of the office scene in *The Adding Machine*. Moss Hart in *Lady in the Dark* (1941) presents the dreams of the heroine through expres-

sionistic devices similar to those in *Beggar on Horseback*, the dreams being subordinated to realistic frame. Comparable, too, to the piano and chair throughout the dream scenes in the latter are the doctor and his office in the dream scenes in the former.

Of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938) Alexander Dean declared that "only now has Thornton Wilder . . . boldly stripped the stage of its three walls, which have 'cabbined, cribbed, and caged' playwrights for several centuries."⁴ But the three walls had been stripped away by the expressionists over a decade before—if not, in fact, even earlier by Fuchs, who had declared that true perspective in the theatre being impossible, the third dimension might as well be disregarded. In negating the three walls *Our Town* manifests expressionism. The scenery, too, in this play is expressionistic—the chairs and tables for the interior of the houses and the trellises for the exteriors, the stepladders for second floors, the plank supported by chair backs for ironing board as well as soda fountain, chairs for graves and for pews in the church, and even the screen of umbrellas from behind which Emily appears in the graveyard scene. The lack of conventional scenery expresses one of the most important media of all—the stage itself. The play manifests expressionism not only in negating the three walls but in projecting the fourth wall. The curtain is up and the house lights are on as the action begins. The Stage Manager, pipe in mouth, "leaning against the right proscenium pillar watches the late arrivals in the audience." Steps leading down from the stage to the orchestra provide an exit through the auditorium. Theatrical illusion is also broken down when lines are spoken by the Woman in the Balcony, the Tall Man at Back of Auditorium, and the Lady in a Box. The church choir sings in the orchestra pit. The stage is projected, too, in the monologues of the Stage Manager, Editor Webb, and Professor Willard. In fact the entire play might be considered a monologue—the monologue of the State Manager, illustrated by the acting of the other characters and even by the Stage Manager himself. Asides are spoken in the arbitrarily unrealistic manner

⁴The *Yale Review*, XXVII (Summer, 1938), p. 836.

of those in *Strange Interlude*. Pantomime particularly prominent in *Our Town*, is emphasized by absence of stage properties. Similar and simultaneous movement in the kitchens of the two houses in Act I suggests the unified movement of the men in the five little offices in *Roger Bloomer*. Monodrama is exemplified in Emily returning to earth, and distortion of time when the Stage Manager permits her to go back to her twelfth birthday. Time is also distorted in the reporting of events which have not yet occurred. And the distortion of both time and space in the graveyard scene is suggestive of the scene "a pleasant place" in *The Adding Machine*. But although the stage had been stripped of its three walls before Mr. Wilder wrote his play, *Our Town* is excellent evidence that studied distortion is still effective in the theatre.

Our Town, its author has declared, "sprang from a deep admiration for those little white towns in the hills and from a deep devotion to the theatre."⁹ This is significant, because it testifies to Mr. Wilder's concern not only with the meaning of his play but with the very practical problem of how to present the meaning on the stage. *Our Town* exemplifies a proper collaboration of staging and content, of theatre and drama. Although his play is not essentially expressionistic, Mr. Wilder could not have written it if his devotion to the theatre had not implied an appreciation of the work of playwrights like John Howard Lawson and the other expressionists, who had shown how the stage can express meaning beyond reality—meaning which cannot be expressed by realism in scenery, stage properties, and acting. Had *Our Town* been written a few years earlier, it would have been set against a realistic background of New England small-town scenes. In fact, the moving-picture version of the play made that concession to reality. This, however, is as it should be, for the camera can obtain effects impossible even by the most realistic attempts on the stage to make canvas and paint and artificial light represent what they are not. On the other hand, the province of the theatre includes those realms of suggestion and illusion

⁹The New York Times, February 13, 1938, Sec. X, p. 1.

which no camera can photograph. And the expressionists having demonstrated that a stage stripped of its neatly confining walls can somehow project meaning beyond reality, Thornton Wilder had at hand the very pattern for staging his broad canvas in the spirit in which he had created it—with realism and with generality. The generality is expressed through the lack of conventional scenery and properties, a distortion of time and space, and through other devices the expressionists had established. The danger in realistic scenery is that the scenery can exist for its own sake. In *Our Town* the scenery never does. However, although it does not obtrude beyond its proper function of helping to interpret the play, it performs this function so smoothly and so simply that *Our Town* illustrates more distinctly than any other modern play one of the most significant contributions of expressionism—an harmonious collaboration of drama and theatre.

In *The Skin of Our Teeth* Mr. Wilder again employs expressionistic devices to bring out the meaning of his play. Again the characters are types, some are even abstractions, and some represent more than one person. Asides and soliloquies are spoken frankly. Music is distorted, and distortion of scenery is characteristic throughout. The illusion of the fourth wall is broken again and again, time is telescoped, and anachronism is worked to the limit.

Of such are the contributions of expressionism to the drama. That many of them are innovations in staging is significant, for no other type of drama depends so much on staging to tie together all the arts of the theatre, including the art of the playwright. No other is more genuinely theatric. In itself the expressionistic movement was of less significance. It did not produce a great play. But in freeing the drama from stultifying convention, in widening old avenues of expression and in opening new ones, expressionism encouraged playwrights to experiment. It has been a stimulating force in modern drama.

by Leonard F. Dean

SHAKESPEARE'S TREATMENT OF CONVENTIONAL IDEAS

THE basic problems of Shakespearean criticism are continually revealed to be those of philosophy and criticism in general. Scholarly disclosure of the milieu in which Shakespeare worked has helped to correct and strengthen speculative nineteenth-century commentary. Scientific scholars have of course gone beyond this to suggest new and important aesthetic evaluations of their own. The difficulty arises from the fact that those evaluations are not purely the product of the historical method which is openly employed and championed. The result is to obscure what is actually happening in the critical process, to employ criteria that are insufficiently examined, and to produce a specious union of history and criticism rather than the real one which is sought. Indeed recent scientific scholars admit this limitation in their predecessors' method. Professor Draper writes typically¹ that "Shakespeare's use of a stock figure or a technical device, to be sure, does not directly settle the interpretation of the play. . . ." And after listing the other historical approaches that have been tried, he concludes that "even all this together is not enough." He then asserts that what is needed as the basis for interpretation is an account of Elizabethan manners and ideas. These "furnish the most fundamental, the most revelatory, background; for the plays of Shakespeare are the expression of very life." This enlargement of the historical basis for criticism has in fact been going on for some time; it is evident in this country in the writings of Professor Hardin Craig, Lily B. Campbell, O. J. Campbell, Theodore Spencer, and

¹John W. Draper, *The "Hamlet" of Shakespeare's Audience* (Duke University Press, 1938), pp. 7, 11-12.

others. Professor Spencer declares that it is necessary to take in nothing less than the Elizabethan conception of man, of the social order, and of the whole universe.

The method in practice is familiar. Since Shakespeare was not in fact a learned man, it is argued with apparent reason that his moral and social ideas must have been those that were commonly held in his day and that found expression in the more popular manuals and compendiums. From these sources, rather than from the works of original thinkers, a fairly elaborate world picture is drawn. This is easily done, as Professor Spencer observes, because of "the remarkable unanimity with which all serious thinkers, at least on the popular level, express themselves about man's nature and his place in the world."³ The next step is to examine the plays for signs of this reconstructed world picture. A great many such signs are to be found. Shakespeare's knowledge of the prevailing ideas about the proper hierarchical order of society, of man's faculties, and so on, is thoroughly established. At this point there is a temptation to pass beyond historical annotation to a normative conclusion. It is this: Shakespeare always attempted to illustrate and confirm conventional ideas; he is most successful as a dramatist when he does this most completely.

This positive criterion is of course never adopted openly, but it does operate subterraneously in a negative form. The critic should not condemn Shakespeare for failing to espouse ideas that are popular today but that were not popular or were perhaps not even known in the Elizabethan period. Professor Spencer argues, for example, that the two plays dealing with Henry IV are meant to demonstrate the disaster that is caused by rebellion in the established social order. "A kingdom is in the chaos of civil war, and is only restored to order by the right kind of king." It is clear that Professor Spencer, like a good many others, privately doubts that Henry V is the right kind of king. Nevertheless, he proceeds to the rigorous conclusion that it "is in

³*Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* (New York, 1942), p. 1.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 77.

Henry V . . . that we find the fullest description of what government and kingship should be. Hal has reformed . . . , and though to modern readers his behavior as Henry V by no means makes him a perfect individual, there can be no doubt that Shakespeare intended him to embody all that a king should be. . . .¹ To doubt that this was Shakespeare's intention, in other words, is to ask him to have aimed at some kind of modern liberal ideal in an age of limited monarchy. The difficulty can be illustrated still more clearly from Professor Draper's interpretation of Polonius,² which attacks the notion that the Lord Chamberlain was shallow and hidebound and concludes that on the contrary "he was not far removed from the Elizabethan ideal of what a courtier, what a father, what a 'Worthie Priuie Counciller' should be." Again the conclusion is supported primarily by reference to popular writers. That Shakespeare intends us to admire Polonius' advice to Laertes, for example, is demonstrated by the fact "that just such aphorisms appear in books of parental advice by popular writers . . . and by men of the world. . . ." In every detail "Polonius . . . most represents the maintenance of the established *status quo*." To conclude that Shakespeare's portrait of him is at all satirical, therefore, is to assert that Shakespeare was a radical and unelizabethan. "Had Shakespeare so much of rebellion against the established order as this would presuppose?" This is the crux of the matter. On the one hand is the argument that to allow Shakespeare any but conventional Elizabethan ideas is to commit the error of modernism in our interpretation. On the other hand is the strong feeling of most readers that the plays are more than dramatic *exempla* in support of established beliefs and institutions and that they cannot be satisfactorily analyzed and judged by that criterion.

The problem may be generalized to that of the function of literature with respect to tradition and change. When reality is conceived as static perfection, the literature produced is exemplary and allegorical. Since the flux of circumstance is mere

¹*Ibid.*, p. 79.

²*Op. cit.*, pp. 40-53.

appearance without real status, it is not binding on the artist; he manipulates its deceptively alluring details in order to illustrate the reality which is absolutely known. The golden world so pictured in allegory and *exempla* is familiar; it appears in the medieval saint's life and in the latest doctrinaire novel. The intention is to present a purified picture of experience as a guide and stimulus to action. Something like this is being implied about Shakespeare's plays when it is asserted that they can be no more than dramatic illustrations of conventional beliefs; but this of course is not the final explicit judgment of the historical critics in question. Professor Spencer states near the end of his study that the "second fact that emerges from our picture of Shakespeare's work as a whole—and this is something at which I have previously only hinted—is that though he drew very largely on what he inherited of the conventional concepts of man . . . , nevertheless Shakespeare's vision of human life transcends anything given him by his time . . . it is the individual human life, the thing itself underlying codification that Shakespeare gives us, and which makes him . . . 'not of an age but for all time.'"⁹

This way of organizing a critical study seems to be very dangerous. During the lengthy historical annotation, the critic emphasizes Shakespeare's knowledge of conventional ideas by adopting an aesthetic that must ultimately be repudiated. A prefatory warning that the historical interpretations are deliberately incomplete does not explain how satisfactory interpretations of any length can be produced from inadequate assumptions. This procedure is needlessly dangerous if there is a single set of assumptions that will do justice to the historical perspective and at the same time provide a satisfactory criterion for judging the philosophic value of the plays. Such an aesthetic seems to be readily available. Some of the phrasing that follows is Whitehead's⁷ but many of the ideas are old and they have frequently been used in criticism, as recently under the term *irony*.

When reality is conceived as process rather than as static

⁹*Op. cit.*, p. 208.

⁷Chiefly from *Science and the Modern World* (1925), *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), and *Modes of Thoughts* (1938).

perfection, aesthetic value becomes the harmony of tradition and change. "Art at its highest exemplifies the metaphysical doctrine of the interweaving of absoluteness upon relativity. Traditional ideas are never static; they are either fading into meaningless formulae, or are gaining power by the new lights thrown by a more delicate apprehension. Some admixture of discord is necessary in the transition. The destruction of immediate realizations for the sake of purpose is a sacrifice to harmony. To understand, to strive for action, is always to exclude a background of intellectual incoherence. But wisdom is the persistent pursuit of the deeper understanding. Complete conformity means the loss of life. A power of incorporating vague and disorderly elements of experience is essential for the advance into novelty. It reverses the slow descent of accented thought towards the inactive commonplace. The true rationalism must always transcend itself by recurrence to the concrete in search for inspiration." The artist does this by working through symbolic individuality. In this way he confronts finite systems with the importance of their omissions and helps to reaffirm the ideal.

Presumably something like this is intended by Professor Spencer in his statement that Shakespeare's timelessness comes from his ability to give us "the individual human life, the thing itself underlying codification." Indeed the real error of modernism is to assume that it is unhistoric to allow Socratic insights of this sort to Shakespeare and his age. Furthermore, to act rigorously upon this assumption obliges one to undervalue or misread powerful and original elements in the plays. This can be illustrated by a brief re-examination of the function of Polonius and the theme of *Henry IV*.

It is useful to approach Polonius through Claudius. He is presented as a person who wishes to believe that the conventional structure of society is indeed reality. He will therefore quietly replace his brother as king and husband. Once he is in his new position, the pattern will give him safety—there's a divinity doth hedge a king. He understands that the pattern imposes certain duties, but he performs them with great skill. He is un-

doubtedly an able ruler and a loving husband. Why then should anyone object? Let us go on now being happy as if nothing had happened. But Hamlet does object. He cannot be persuaded by any kind words and deeds that there has not been a radical change. Incest and murder are his terms for what has happened, and he therefore insists that his father be avenged and his mother punished. Now into this developing situation comes an expert on moral and social patterns, Polonius, the official councillor on conventionality. That he is well equipped with knowledge of the status quo is demonstrated dramatically by his first speeches, as well as by Professor Draper's external evidence. At this point historical annotation is a real help, just as it had been before with respect to Claudius. It shows clearly that Polonius' picture of the world is a mosaic of clichés. As a result he is perfectly assured and at the same time able to change his mind with the greatest ease. He knows instinctively—since the knowledge has been absorbed and never really examined—that young princes are hot-blooded seducers. Since his daughter cannot obtain the proper price for her favors, let her refuse to continue discussing counterfeit tender. He next knows just as easily that Hamlet is simply love sick. That this is the result of his own orders to Ophelia is unfortunate—but what would you have me do; was I not sensible at the time? Failing to convince the King, who very naturally wants to believe, Polonius urges him to step behind the arras and observe reality as he sees it. There, as was to be expected, he is destroyed by the Hamlet he could not comprehend. Claudius' superiority to Polonius is indicated in part by his greater ability to understand Hamlet's point of view. He is unable to repent, that is he cannot fully see the falseness of his own assumptions; but he does know what can be said against them. Polonius is never permitted that much self-knowledge. He is an appealing figure, but through him Shakespeare has made very clear the limitations of conventional thinking.

The social pattern which is dominant in the first part of *Henry IV* is certainly that of the tranquil and orderly state based on

monarchy, degree, and vocation. It is announced in the King's opening speech, and then immediately broken by news of rebellion and by sight of Prince Hal failing to fulfill his vocation. At this point there are two possibilities: the rebels can succeed and Hal become wholly corrupt, or the King can put down the rebels and Hal can reform. Historical fact requires the second, but the details can be safely adjusted so that the defeat of the rebels and the reformation of the prince are parts of the same action. This is the orthodox Tudor use of history. The lesson from the past is neat and unmistakable. When nobles leave their place and when princes are irresponsible there is public trouble. Order can be restored only by the prince's return to his vocation. But to end analysis here is to ignore other important effects of the play, and that these effects were intended may be presumed from the fact that they are produced by elements that Shakespeare himself invented or developed. All readers agree that Hotspur is presented sympathetically. His gallantry and energy are of course a useful contrast to Hal's sloth, but they are also admirable in themselves. The result is to make us think critically about a social scheme that would automatically condemn all rebels. By the end of the play Hotspur is degraded and destroyed so that Hal can acquire his virtues, but he is never allowed to become easily detestable. The uncalculating quality of his ambition, his refusal to consider himself a skulking rebel, the healthy and high-spirited affection between him and his wife—these and other elements complicate the orthodox reaction to him as a rebel. The manner of his degradation is also significant. His gallant energy is made to appear excessive and sophomoric; his failing is a caricature of his virtue; but it is a fault as common to respectable people as to rebels. Hal perceives his opponent's weakness and thereby rises in our estimation. At the same time, Henry V at his noisy worst is not far away.

Another complication is introduced through the long invented speeches of warning addressed by the King to Hal. It was natural for Henry to compare his former situation with Richard II to that of Hal and Hotspur. The only lesson from history that he

wishes to suggest is that social confusion results from unkingly behavior, that a king should keep his person fresh and new and thereby gain authority to maintain order. This intention and the device of the set speech itself are thoroughly conventional. But in the course of pretending the comparison Henry is made to show that history poses other and more basic questions about the nature of the royal vocation. He is so sincerely eager for Hal to reform that he exposes his own previous dissimulation as an example of proper conduct. The sanctity of kingship is thus damaged by the suggestion that it may often rest on little more than skilful play-acting. Even a rebel, as Henry himself was, may become a respectable king by means of expedient behavior. We recall Claudius, who failed; but who was opposed by a Hamlet.

Falstaff is of course the play's chief critic of respectable beliefs. Historical research shows his relation to characters on the stage and to persons in real life, and thus helps to explain his obvious theatrical function; but in the course of the play he is developed from these antecedents into an instrument for revealing that good people lead unexamined lives and that the aphorisms of the status quo may indeed be empty verbalisms. " 'Tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation." "Company, villanous company, hath been the spoil of me." "I was as virtuously given as a gentleman need to be." "Thou know'st in the state of innocency Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of vallany." And so on to the show-piece catechism of honor. When Hal complains that Falstaff has enlisted pitiful rascals, Shakespeare gives the fat knight a famous cliché for answer. "Tut, tut; good enough to toss; food for powder, food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as better. Tush, man, mortal men, mortal men." "Ay," agrees the respectable Westmoreland almost automatically, "but Sir John, methinks they are exceedingly poor and bare, too beggarly." I'm not responsible for that, returns Falstaff. The effect is unsettling. The efficient and approved officers are confounded by Falstaff's bland use of the conventional opinions to which they subscribe. His words are proper, but the

occasion is not. He should have saved this speech for the battlefield where it would have been a comfortable thing to say over the bodies of dead commoners.

Falstaff's judgment on the war is a kind of summary of his position and function. "Well, God be thanked for these rebels, they offend none but the virtues. I laud them, I praise them." It is easy to be virtuous, that is, in a world of black and white; but Shakespeare has been careful not to present such a world. So it comes about that when the King draws the final moral, "Thus ever did rebellion find rebuke," the words mean something more than they did at the beginning of the play. The conventional social pattern has been so thoroughly examined that we re-accept it with the understanding that it is no more than a convention. We do not reject it, because we now better understand the need for it; but its claim to absoluteness has been exposed. Despite the big and proper words with which it is buttressed, it is revealed as only another make-shift account of reality, a necessary but temporary pattern of black and white that does not quite match the moving colors of full experience. The truth of the play, in short, is not to be found in any one element or set of elements but in the interaction of them all. It is neither radically modern nor conventionally Elizabethan, but a revelation of the deeper truth that organizations for action are essential yet finite.

To deny that something like this was Shakespeare's intention is to ignore the most effective elements in the play; and to deny that Elizabethan spectators could perceive such an intention is to refuse to grant them any power of attaining self-knowledge. Furthermore, it seems possible along this line to arrive at satisfactory aesthetic evaluations and at the same time to make full use of our historical information. Historians can tell us what the popular Elizabethan ideas actually were. It is better to have too much information of that sort rather than too little, for there is a constant need to correct the notion that today's assumptions have always been dominant. But on the other hand, Shakespeare's intentions and accomplishments can be inferred only from a full

analysis of the plays. Without being unhistorical we may ask that he treat popular ideas in the philosophic manner that has been described. If investigation shows that *Henry V* is somewhat sentimental, nothing prevents us from saying so. Chauvinism is reprehensible at any time. It is clear that drama detached from its intellectual setting is meaningless; it should be equally clear that drama which merely confirms conventional beliefs is inconsequential. Great drama, like all great art, examines and revitalizes traditional ideas.

by Marshall W. Stearns

UNSEX THE SKELETON: NOTES ON THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS

DYLAN THOMAS has been treated as a watched pot by his reviewers since 1934 when, at the age of twenty, he published his first book of poems. The few critics who have not indulged in hedged banalities (several American critics have limited themselves to viewing the poet's treatment of sex with alarm) differ extravagantly in their estimates of Thomas. In 1936, Edith Sitwell stated: "I know of no young poet of our time whose poetic gifts are on such great lines," while three years later, Herbert Read delivered the unanswerable pronouncement that Thomas's work is "the most absolute poetry that has been written in our time." This general opinion has been seconded by Conrad Aiken enthusiastically and by David Daiches, Peter De Vries, and Horace Gregory more guardedly.

On the other hand, H. G. Porteus compares a reading of Thomas's poetry to an "unconducted tour of Bedlam." A few critics have been unable to agree with themselves: Julian Symonds, who once thought highly of Thomas, now refers to the poet's works as "jokes, rhetorical intellectual fakes of the highest class," and Stephen Spender, reversing the experience of Symonds, has found some merit in Thomas recently, although he once wrote that "the truth is that Thomas's poetry is turned on like a tap; it is just poetic stuff with no beginning or end, shape, or intelligent and intelligible control." Meanwhile Louis Untermeyer, who has just added Thomas to the fold of his *Modern British Poetry*, introduces his ward with the unexceptionable remark that "at first glance Thomas's poems seem incomplete, if not wholly obscure, lacking correspondence with the world of ordinary experience." In spite of this dubious recommendation, Thomas

appears to be in the process of becoming a standard modern poet, slimly but regularly represented in contemporary anthologies.

In general, however, the watchers seem to have come to the conclusion that the pot may have simmered but it will never boil. The question that most reviewers are inclined to ask themselves (and answer in the negative) is whether Thomas may be considered "promising." I suspect that this question is no longer relevant. Thomas seems to me to be a mature poet, and although his case is extreme, it is by no means unique. In a way, he typifies the plight of the contemporary poet of indisputable ability. Perhaps the following notes, which attempt some explanation of what Thomas is trying to do and how he goes about doing it, will shed some light on the problem. I am limiting myself chiefly to the subject matter of the poetry and the method of composition. Before proceeding, however, I should like to acknowledge my debt to Thomas's friend, Henry Treece, who has generously permitted me to read the manuscript of his book on Thomas.

The importance of Thomas is two-fold: he is an original poet and a great influence upon his fellow poets. The decay of the Auden-Spender-MacNeice influence and the growth of a new romantic movement in England has been ably outlined by Daiches in *Poetry* (June, 1943). The pioneer group in this alleged renaissance call themselves "The Apocalypse" (evidence of the continuing influence of D. H. Lawrence), and they point to Dylan Thomas as their more immediate predecessor; the group is led by Henry Treece, G. S. Fraser, and J. F. Hendry, and it includes about a dozen authors. The merits of these men, which are by no means inconsiderable, are discussed by Francis Scarfe in his *Auden and After* (1942).

The Apocalyptics have announced a program and published two collections of their work, *The New Apocalypse* (1940) and *The White Horseman* (1941). At first, they were more or less occupied with distinguishing their own group from the Surrealists, pointing out that they, like Thomas, did not indulge in a

"perpetual flow of irrational thought." There was a definite relationship between the two, however, for the Apocalypticists simply chose Thomas and Surrealism as logical points of departure for their own movement, leaning toward Thomas wherever the two were at odds. The Apocalypticists were more definite in their rejection of their immediate predecessors. "The younger generation of poets," writes Fraser, "today, tend to derive from Pound and Eliot, through Freud and the Surrealists, through especially in the very recent past, Dylan Thomas, more or less side-tracking the influence of their immediate forerunners (Auden, Spender, MacNeice)."

This isolation of Thomas, even as an influence, points to his uniqueness; he assumes a lonely but preëminent rôle among a welter of so-called ancestors of the Apocalypticists. In 1939, Treece and Hendry, attempting to define their poetic preserve and prevent poaching, announced in an advertisement: "Apocalyptic creation is a European movement or tendency [this apparently for the benefit of a newly formed American group] whose immediate forebears are Kafka, Epstein, Picasso, the later Yeats and Dylan Thomas." Thomas has been similarly linked with *Revelations*, Shakespeare, Webster, Blake, Donne, Hopkins, and others, on comfortably equal if not superior terms.

For so young a poet, Thomas has published much. Four books have appeared in England: *Eighteen Poems* (1934), *Twenty-Five Poems* (1936), *The Map of Love* (1939), and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (1940). A generous selection from the poet's first three books appeared in the United States under the title, *The World I Breathe* (1939), and a group of seventeen old and new poems entitled *New Poems* was published here in 1943. Little is known of Thomas's life; he is Welsh and was born in Swansea in 1914. He is now writing cinema scripts for the British Ministry of Information. A high-pitched documentary firm, *These Are the Men*, appeared recently in this country with Thomas as co-author.

I

The subject matter of Thomas's poetry has given rise to widely divergent comment. Herbert Read describes it approvingly as "poetry of the elemental physical experience: birth, copulation, death," while Julian Symonds observes: "What is said in Mr. Thomas's poetry is that the seasons change; that we decrease in vigour as we grow older; that life has no obvious meaning; that love dies. His poems mean no more than that. They mean too little." The fallacy in Symonds' line of criticism, which paraphrases a poem and then criticizes the paraphrase, is clear, but it points to the content of Thomas's verse. Further, such themes are capable of conferring timelessness and universality upon poetry.

In an early poem, Thomas considers various themes as the subject for poetry (*Eighteen Poems*, p. 16):

And what's the rub? Death's feather on the nerve?
Your mouth, my love, the thistle in the kiss?
My Jack of Christ born thorny on the tree?
The words of death are dryer than his stiff,
My wordy wounds are printed with your hair.
I would be tickled by the rub that is:
Man be my metaphor.

The poet seems to be using the word, *man*, in a special sense. He rejects what he considers the static concepts of death, earthly love, and religion ("the words of death are dryer than" the corpse of Jesus), and select *man* as the theme of his poetry, "man living, loving, using his five senses and functioning fully," as Drew and Sweeney have said. And more. Man for Thomas is man from seed to grave, with the emphasis on the grave, and the poet constantly attempts to view the entire progression simultaneously.

The literal truth of this statement regarding the subject-matter of Thomas's poetry may be illustrated by an example of his treatment of pre-natal experience. Describing Christ's anguish of foreknowledge in his mother's womb, Thomas writes (*Eighteen Poems*, p. 11):

Before I knocked and flesh let enter,
With liquid hands tapped on the womb,
I who was shapeless as the water
That shaped the Jordan near my home
Was brother to Mnetha's daughter
And sister to the fathering worm.

I who was deaf to spring and summer,
Who knew not sun nor moon by name,
Felt thud beneath my flesh's armour,
As yet was in a molten form,
The leaden stars, the rainy hammer
Swung by my father from his dome . . .

As yet ungotten, I did suffer;
The rack of dreams my lily bones
Did twist into a living cypher,
And flesh was snipped to cross the lines
Of gallow crosses on the liver
And brambles in the wringing brains.

My throat knew thirst before the structure
Of Skin and vein around the well
Where words and water make a mixture
Unfailing till the blood runs foul;
My heart knew love, my belly hunger;
I smelt the maggot in my stool . . .

You who bow down at cross and altar,
Remember me and pity Him
Who took my flesh and bone for armour
And doublecrossed my mother's womb.

Although Christ-in-embryo is speaking, and the stress is upon his immediate surroundings, he forsee the course of his life from birth to crucifixion. This mixture of physiology and Christian myth is typical of Thomas, although the final quest of worshippers to pity God (who used Jesus as armor and "double-crossed" Mary in the sense that she gave birth to an immortal rather than mortal man) is more typical of his early work. In general, the variation of pre-natal experience plays a shrill counterpoint to the poet's theme that man is born to die.

Thomas treats the subjects of birth and growth in a similar manner (*Eighteen Poems*, pp. 23-24):

All world was one, one windy nothing,
My world was christened in a stream of milk . . .
The body prospered, teeth in the marrowed gums,
The growing bones, the rumour of manseed
Within the hallowed gland, blood blessed the heart . . .
The plum my mother plucked matured slowly,
The boy she dropped from darkness at her side
Into the sided lap of light grew strong,
Was muscled, matted, wise to the crying thigh . . .
And from the first declension of the flesh
I learned man's tongue . . .
The root of tongues ends in a spentout cancer,
That but a name, where maggots have their X. . .

Here again, the poet's view of his chosen subject, man, is predicated upon and takes its direction from the grave; he feels that death alone connects man with reality.

The major theme of man in Thomas's poetry is variously accompanied by the minor themes of religion and sex, which are sometimes fused at a high temperature. Although the poet subscribes to no formal religion, his verse reveals the constant influence of a strong religious background in which the evangelical preaching of the Welsh Bethel plays a large part. He writes poems based upon church ritual (*Map of Love*, pp. 9-10); by the use of the pathetic fallacy, he twists the traditional symbolism of communion into far different channels, saying that man destroys himself by utilizing the grape and the oat to make wine and bread (*Twenty-Five Poems*, p. 7). Biblical allusions crowd his poetry and it is evident that his emotions are deeply involved in religious matters, although his references to this subject are likely to be characterized more by rebellion than conformity.

The poet's attitude toward sex is central and closely connected with the allied themes of religion and man. The reason why Thomas feels that it should play an important part in his poetry is indicated by his answer to the question, "Have you been influenced by Freud and how do you regard him?" (*New Verse*, October, 1934):

Yes. Whatever is hidden should be made naked. To be stripped of darkness is to be clean, to strip of darkness is

to make clean. Poetry, recording the stripping of the individual darkness, must, inevitably, cast light upon what has been hidden for too long, and, by so doing, make clean the naked exposure. Freud cast light on a little of the darkness he had exposed. Benefiting by the sight of the light and the knowledge of the hidden nakedness, poetry must drag further into the clean nakedness of light more even of the hidden causes than Freud could realise.

At the same time, Thomas defined poetry as "the rhythmic . . . movement from an overclothed blindness to a naked vision," and added, "My poetry is, or should be, useful to me for one reason: it is the record of my individual struggle from darkness towards some measure of light." This view of the act of writing as a kind of catharsis is not new but it is evident in much of Thomas's poetry; it springs apparently from a strong personal need rather than any thorough understanding of Freud.

It is clear that the poet was ridden by all the witches of a lonely adolescence, and only his undeniable talent keeps some of his poetry from being simply psychopathic. Death and disgrace conflict with the sexual impulse (*Eighteen Poems*, p. 17):

This world is half the devil's and my own,
Daft with the drug that's smoking in a girl
And curling round the bud that forks her eye.
An old man's shank one-marrowed with my bone,
And all the herrings smelling in the sea,
I sit and watch the worm beneath my nail
Wearing the quick away.

The sexual implications of these lines (which include an obvious pun) are numerous and exact. More characteristically, sex and religion often interpenetrate. The fusion of the two reaches perhaps its highest pitch in one of Thomas's most difficult poems, the sonnet on the crucifixion (*Twenty-Five Poems*, p. 46):

This was the crucifixion on the mountain,
Time's nerve in vinegar, the gallow grave
As tarred with blood as the bright thorns I wept;
The world's my wound, God's Mary in her grief,
Bent like three trees and bird-papped in her shift,
With pins for teardrops is the long wound's woman.

This was the sky, Jack Christ, each minstrel angle
Drove in the heaven-driven of the nails
Till the three-coloured rainbow from my nipples
From pole to pole leapt round the snail-waked world.
I by the tree of thieves, all glory's sawbones
Unsex the skeleton this mountain minute,
And by this blowclock witness of the sun
Suffer the heaven's children through my heartbeat.

Although this poem is the climax in a series of ten loosely-connected sonnets, it may be treated independently without loss of meaning.

The lines may best be explained, I think, as the poet's attempt to describe the crucifixion as interpreted by Mary, the mother of God, the mother of Jesus, and the source of all creation. The key to the poem is the fundamental contrast between the earthly and the heavenly Mary. Assuming that the statement, "I wept," in the third line, is made by Mary, the preceding lines are her description of the setting. Christ is likened to the nerve of Time, qualified by the phrase "in vinegar," which emphasizes the bitterness of the occasion as well as recalling the vinegar given to Christ on the cross. The "gallow grave" is a typical alliterative antithesis in which the words, in addition to the connotation of criminality of "gallow," contrast the state of being above and below the ground, death and resurrection. The phrase "as tarred (i.e. dark and clotted) with blood as the bright thorns," may refer back to Christ or more probably the grave, bringing to mind the realistic portrayal of a tortured Saviour in the painting of Grünewald.

The fourth line emphasizes the central rôle of Mary. "God's" may be taken either as a possessive or a contraction; Mary belongs to God, or better, Mary is God and her grief is God's grief. And this wound of the world, the crucifixion of her son, is her wound. The next two lines describe Mary still more objectively. She is bent as the three trees or crosses on Calvary, which suggest the trinity. The words, "birdpapped through her shift," are not as effective. They may mean that Mary is bird-breasted or soft-breasted (pigeon-breasted?), or better, perhaps, that

she has small, pointed breasts shaped like the beaks of birds. Since the crucifixion ends her earthly rôle, she need no longer be a symbol of fecundity. The image of tears hurting like pins is reminiscent of Picasso, and the description of Mary as the woman of the long wound is a variation of an earlier phrase, perhaps with sexual overtones (the period after *woman* is omitted in the American edition).

Lines seven to ten commence with a repetition of the first line and consist of a more detailed description of the crucifixion. Mary's reference to Jesus as "Jack Christ" (a phrase found in Gerard Manley Hopkins) suggests Christ's relation to common humanity. This concept, and the similarly earthly detail of the nails, is contrasted to the sky, symbol of eternity, while the pun "minstrel angle" (ministering angel?) carries the literal meaning of the angle at which the nails are driven or, more emphatically, the singing corners of the heavens. The nails are "heaven-driven" in the sense that the crucifixion was predestined by God. The "three-coloured rainbow" that springs from her nipples symbolizes the trinity of which Mary is the mother in a strict sense. The image is one of erotic ecstasy, suggesting the stigmata and bordering upon the masochistic. Christianity leapt "from pole to pole" around a world "snail-waked," or slowly waking to its significance.

The last four lines contain the crux of Thomas's interpretation of the crucifixion. Mary, "all glory's sawbones," or the doctor or salvation of the world, stands by "the tree of thieves" or the cross upon which thieves are crucified. The phrase, "this mountain minute," refers to the tremendous significance of the moment, but the preceding words, "unsex the skeleton," are not as clear. Two interpretations suggest themselves. As the symbol of mortality, "skeleton" may refer to the body of Christ which is unsexed at his death while he becomes sexless and immortal; Mary, witnessing this, relinquishes maternal claims to her earthly son. More probably, "I . . . unsex the skeleton," may mean that Mary renounces her earthly function as mother of "Jack Christ"

and takes on her eternal role as mother of God. This is the basic antithesis.

The last two lines refer apparently to the eclipse which occurred during the crucifixion, destroying all sense of time. Mary calls it to witness that "through her heartbeat" or by means of her son, she suffers or makes possible the "children of heaven" or her heavenly childbirth. In brief, the sonnet is an assertion of Mary's all-important part in the holy mystery. At the most crucial moment of all time, when man becomes god and mortality immortality, she plays the one essential role, and through her, sex rises to asexual and eternal glory.

"None of the younger poets of today," say Drew and Sweeney, "is closer to physical life in the biological sense and to spiritual life in the religious sense." It should be added that no poet combines the two as closely, for although the dualism of life-death, body-soul, and sex-sin are not reconciled in Thomas's poetry, these elements often merge. It would be incorrect to conclude that the content of the poet's work is limited to variations on the themes of man, sex, and religion. Such a conclusion would be an arbitrary over-simplification of the most important subjects in his poetry, but although he has a considerable range of subject-matter, it is with these themes that he has achieved his best work.

II

An understanding of the poet's method of composition is essential to an appreciation of his poetry. Various critics have selected a more or less similar characteristic in Thomas's verse which may be explained by his method of composition. Thus, Symonds complains of the poet's method of "statement . . . repeated with variations," while Andrews Wanning speaks favorably of Thomas's "intensive description," and "unity generated by metaphor." From a different point of view, Scarfe notes that the poet "is not expressing so much as discovering his feelings;" and Spendor remarks that it is poetry "of being rather than thinking and knowing." Glyn Jones isolates the most notable result of Thomas's method of composition when he writes that the poet's

best faculty is his "unexpectedness of verbal patterns." The characteristic which these critics tend to describe is the poet's conscious goal.

Thomas has written some highly penetrating comments on his own poetry to his friend Henry Treece. In answer to the criticism that his poems are diffuse, the poet replies:

... a poem by myself needs a host of images, because its centre is a host of images. I make one image,—though "make" is not the word, I let, perhaps, an image be "made" emotionally in me and then apply to it what intellectual and critical forces I possess—, let it breed another, let that image contradict the first, make, of the third image bred out of the other two together, a fourth contradictory image, and let them all, within my imposed formal limits conflict. Each image holds within it the seed of its own destruction, and my dialectical method, as I understand it, is a constant building up and breaking down of the images that come out of the central seed, which is itself destructive and constructive at the same time.

What I want to try to explain—and it's necessarily vague to me—is that the life in any poem of mine cannot move concentrically round a central image; the life must come out of the centre; an image must be born and die in another; and any sequence of my images must be a sequence of creations, recreations, destructions, contradictions. . . . My object is, as you say, conventionally "to get things straight." Out of the inevitable conflict of images—inevitable, because of the creative, recreative, destructive and contradictory nature of the motivating centre, the womb of war—I try to make that momentary peace which is a poem. . . . A poem of mine is, or should be, a watertight section of a stream that is flowing all ways, all warring images within it should be reconciled for that small stop of time.

Perhaps the most revealing clue in this self-analysis is Thomas's declaration that he applies a "dialectical method" to the handling of the imagery in his poetry. Apparently, the poet is aware of the fact that the process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (in terms of images) is seldom completed in his verse, but nevertheless that is his aim. Hence, realizing the difficulty of achieving any final synthesis, Thomas is inclined to emphasize the conflict of thesis and antithesis in practice, implying that an ascending

scale of synthesis is reached only to become a never-ending basis for further conflict.

In his handling of imagery, then, Thomas is consciously attempting an interesting experiment, although his use of the Hegelian dialectic is limited and without any ideological basis. It may be simply a rationalization of a personal manner of expression. For the poet is anti-philosophical in a literal sense: he subscribes to no one school of thought, he has read and been influenced by few great books of the preceding ages, and he leans, one supposes, toward the opinion that little is valid above and beyond the level of spontaneous emotion. It may be added that if Thomas's use of dialectic has any appeal to the professional Marxists, it has yet to be noted; for example, Samuel Sillen quotes six lines of Thomas (at second hand) in the *New Masses* (14 September 1943) as an example of the poverty of modern poetry.

In the light of the poet's stated aims regarding the use of imagery, it may be of value to attempt an interpretation of an early but important poem which has been anthologized by Michael Roberts (*The Faber of Modern Verse*) and Louis Untermeyer (*Modern British Poetry*), commented upon favorably by several critics, and never analyzed. Although Thomas may have written better poetry, it is doubtful whether he has written a more characteristic poem:

Light breaks where no sun shines;
Where no sea runs, the waters of the heart
Push in their tides;
And, broken ghosts with glowworms in their heads,
The things of light
File through the flesh where no flesh decks the bones.

A candle in the thighs
Warms youth and seed and burns the seeds of age;
Where no seed stirs,
The fruit of man unwrinkles in the stars,
Bright as a fig;
Where no wax is, the candle shows its hairs.

Dawn breaks behind the eyes;
From poles of skull and toe the windy blood
Slides like a sea;
Nor fenced, nor staked, the gushers of the sky
Spout to the rod
Divining in a smile the oil of tears.

Night in the sockets rounds,
Like some pitch moon, the limit of the globes;
Day lights the bone;
Where no cold is, the skinning gales unpin
The winter's robes;
The film of spring is hanging from the lids.

Light breaks on secret lots,
On tips of thought where thoughts smell in the rain;
When logics die,
The secret of the soil grows through the eye,
And blood jumps in the sun;
Above the waste allotments the dawn halts.

This poem is in regular stanza form, with a steady rhythm and occasional rime. Of the various levels of meaning it communicates, I take it that the basic level is a description of the state of existence; the theme is the process of living.

In the first stanza, the clue to the moment of existence which the poet is describing occurs in the "warring images" of the last line. Since no flesh yet decks the bones, Thomas is probably referring, as he does elsewhere, to the period during or immediately after conception. Thus, the "light" of prescience "breaks" within the embryo, as the blood pushes through its veins like the tides of the ocean. The phrase, "broken ghosts with glowworms in their heads" seems to be in apposition to "the things of light," and to describe these intimations of consciousness or foreknowledge as they present themselves to the child in the womb. The contrast between the concrete and abstract nouns is great, although its success is precarious, and the reader is perhaps reminded of the poet's request to take his poems literally, seeking for no more detailed meaning. More generally, the particular word-order, "where no sun shines," is established by three repe-

titions in the first stanza, to be repeated with diminishing frequency in the following stanzas. Its use is both formal and functional since it ties the poem together and permits a sharper conflict of images.

In the second stanza, the sexual symbolism of the "candle in the thighs" is clear, and that it "warms youth and seed" makes sense. It also "burns the seeds of age" in the sense of "burn up," or even "frustrate." In the old or passionless, "where no seed stirs," the poet says that "the fruit of man unwrinkles in the stars;" that is, sublimation takes place and man's energies or thoughts turn heavenward or away from reality, perhaps toward religion. The word, "unwrinkles," is capable of an ironic sexual interpretation, as well as the following phrase, "bright as a fig;" a fig may be shiny when ripe and young, or wrinkled when dry and old. The last line varies the metaphor: "where no wax is," where there is no flesh or vitality, "the candle shows its hairs," the dead wick or the fleshless bone remains. This stanza contrasts the states of being young or old, virile or impotent.

In the third stanza, the statement that "dawn breaks behind the eyes" may refer to the arrival of consciousness, presumably in the infant. The circulation of the blood in the body is referred to again and compared to the poles, tides, and wind of the earth. This image is clear, but the last three lines present a jumble of imagery. Any interpretation must hinge upon the meaning of "gushers of the sky." The connotations of rain, tears, and even oil-wells are reinforced in the following lines, although they are undeveloped. Further, the conceivable image of a gusher spouting to a divining rod lends itself to a sexual interpretation, while the word "divining" may refer forward or backward and its use suggests a pun. The syntax is fluid and the reader is inclined to equate "gushers of the sky" simply with the processes of nature and conclude that Thomas is saying that life goes on mingled with joy and sadness.

The fourth stanza, with its contrast of night and day, winter and spring, may best be interpreted in the light of the poet's be-

lief that the soul should be stripped of darkness. The ball-in-socket image states the relationship; inside the socket is likened to the pitch-black moon of the unknown and the unconscious, the outside to the illumined bone of truth or self-knowledge. The last three lines, as is the case generally throughout the poem, are a variation of the preceding idea. "Where no cold is," or where the warmth of knowledge exists, the "skinning gales" or the process of living ("skinning" because they flay or lay bare) loosen the "winter's robe" or release the cold impulses of the unconscious. Again, a sexual interpretation of "skinning gales" is possible. The "film of spring," or the prelude to self-knowledge, then becomes visible, existing just beyond the eyelids. The contrasts in this stanza lend themselves to multiple interpretations, and the poet is in danger of losing any precise meaning in a welter of connotations.

The last stanza is perhaps the most elusive. The process of self-exploration is described in terms of the visible or conscious tips of buried thoughts which "smell in the rain." This last phrase is striking in its context but ambiguous. It may mean that the rain of self-analysis nurtures suppressed thoughts as they break through the soil of the unconscious, a meaning developed in the following lines, or more plausibly, that these beginnings of conscious realization are evident in the rain or process of existence. The next three lines, beginning with "when logics die," are a little out of key, for they appear to be an endorsement of the intuitive existence; dispense with logic and the eye learns the "secret of the soil," while life becomes full or the "blood jumps in the sun." The last line, however, is effective. In sudden contrast, Thomas reminds us that above the "waste allotments" of life, death is hovering. "Dawn," a word analogous to the words of light with which the poem is teeming, comes to an end. Day may follow, but it, too, will halt. We are born to die.

A few qualifications should be added to this analysis. The interpretation is arbitrary and literal on a minimal level of meaning. Although I have taken my cues from the poet's own statements wherever possible, I am aware that I do scant justice to

the wealth of implication in the poem. Again, it is an early poem and by no means illustrates the whole range of the poet. In this poem, certain of Thomas's stylistic habits, such as Biblical allusions and the use of compound words, are not represented. More central characteristics, such as the choice of subject-matter, the method of composition, and the devices of technique are well displayed. I suppose that few interested readers will deny the poem some success. That it is characterized by synthesis rather than progression need startle no one who is familiar with T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*.

The poem is a good example of Thomas's dialectical method in practice. It is full of warring images which occasionally result in direct contradictions, such as "things of light" filing through flesh where there is no flesh. Unfortunately, the "warring images" are sometimes at war with themselves; the "momentary peace which is a poem" does not eventuate, and the over-worked reader sometimes finds himself undergoing the discouraging experience of appearing to discover an adequate or even thrilling meaning of a phrase (on what was doubtless intended to be a lower level of connotation), only to realize upon careful re-examination that the phrase is more complex than he first thought and rather defies interpretation. A truce dictated by exhaustion rather than by Thomas results.

Yet the effect is frequently electric, and it may be observed that the most obscure phrases in the poem, such as "broken ghosts" and "gushers of the sky," owe little of their difficulty to the dialectical method. Thomas's obscurity seems to arise in part from his fluid syntax, although his diction and language are seldom as simple as they appear in this poem. Perhaps Henry Treece has come close to the core of the problem when he says that the poet's obscurity is "produced by the inability or lack of desire to conceive himself as being one unit of reality . . . he is unwilling or does not wish to orient himself, to exist as one personality." Such an explanation is given support by the poet's all-embracing concept of his chosen subject, man, as well as his previously discussed treatment of the nativity from the point of

view of Christ and the crucifixion from the point of view of Mary. Further support may be found in Thomas's dialectic. Although it may be of doubtful value to speculate upon the question of how the poet arrived at his dialectic method of handling imagery, one may be permitted to wonder whether or not it mirrors an inner confusion. If it does, and I see little reason to doubt it, the poet has chosen a functional manner of expressing his experiences in the world of today.

Thomas typifies the problem of the poet in our time who has something original to say and an original manner of saying it. Writing ill-paid poetry in a complex age of prose, where the emphasis is upon originality, he has often sacrificed clarity in order to forge a highly individual idiom. This idiom is new and therefore difficult and, largely for these reasons, unpopular. But it is also, I feel, valid. The poet may write better poetry, but I do not think that he will develop into a more easily-classified type of poet, nor do I believe that there is any reason to expect a gradual journey into lucidity. Thomas's influence upon his fellow poets is demonstrably great and it may well become greater. His historical importance is assured, but whether or not his poetry will live rests upon whether or not the general reader is willing to make the effort to understand the poet. There is a small group today who are willing to do so. In the history of poetry, the number of people who found any poet worth the effort of comprehension was never great, and Dylan Thomas will have to be satisfied with less.

by Eric Russell Bentley

MODERN HERO-WORSHIP

NOTES ON CARLYLE, NIETZSCHE, AND STEFAN GEORGE.

I

IF Gibbon is the historian of an age of reason, Carlyle is the historian of an age of individual enterprise which he hopes will be the precursor of an age of heroism. Carlyle did not need a source, such as his expositors claim, in Fichte or Shelley. Such ideas as his were widely ambient. William Blake for one had spat out the ethic of perfectibility and had in an age of urbanity rediscovered the daemon of the unconscious. As a young man he had even declared that the energy which Paul called sin was good, and that the abyss which men called hell could be married to the peak which they called heaven. Blake said that Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it; and Shelley made a myth out of anti-theism by loosing Prometheus from his chains.

One of the few beliefs which the romanticists had in common was that the artist is at once a solitary and a superior person, a hero apart from the herd. On the continent no poet had more influence than Byron, hero and hero-worshipper, rebel and satanist, athlete and cripple. An introvert posing as a rake, a hypochondriac obsessed with the thought that the tree of knowledge was not that of life, a cynic who pretended to prefer the Rienzis to the Christs (as Nietzsche was to prefer Cesare Borgia and Cagliostro to Parsifal), Byron is the bad conscience of the nineteenth century. Every part of his experience is relevant. The sexual problem of romanticism, for instance, finds in him a terrible example. The sex antagonism which the moderns (Nietzsche, Strindberg, Shaw, Freud) stresses has its complement in a feeling that the lover should be as nearly as possible a projection of the

self. Not unconnected with the resurgence of endogamy in our time this feeling is more directly related with the incest motive, in Shelley and Wagner for instance. The innocent-seeming fact that Nietzsche's best friend and worst enemy was his sister pales beside the tremendous fact that Byron actually committed incest.

If I had to choose two men as illustrations of Carlyle's starting point, they would be Byron and Herder. For if a new picture of the individual and a new vision of good and evil are essential to Carlyle's philosophy, so is the new historical and evolutionary appetite. Herder, the father of modern historicism with his clearly evolutionary outlook and his cyclical interpretation of history is, with Vico, the best single symbol of the new historical mind. Like most philosophers of history before Buckle and Marx, and like Nietzsche after them, Carlyle was above all a psychologist, though willing to accept the new concept of a group mind and the new concept of *Zeitgeist*.

A contemporary of Byron's, Carlyle felt the appeal of the romantic ruin and the noble dead. He admired grandeur more than utility, and defiance more than defence. Such admiration is a symptom of the attempt, made by most hero-worshippers, to infuse aesthetic values into history and politics, an infusion done, of course, by sleight of hand, since the hero-worshipper often pretends to be entirely pragmatic. Essentially, however, Carlyle's philosophy of history is a re-interpretation of the romantic love of the heroic past in the light of the new evolutionism. Starting from Walter Scott's schoolboy (or schoolgirl?) love of the *preux chevalier*, Carlyle ends in *Frederick the Great* with a conception of the hero at once more mature and more forbidding. Yet he clings to the aesthetic attitude to the hero—which is one of sheer wonder unmitigated by social considerations and continues, in a succession of sentimental regressive fantasies, to wish himself back at St. Edmundsbury being bossed around by Abbot Samson or at Marston Moor keeping his powder dry with Cromwell. Hero-worship in Carlyle, as later in Nietzsche who was infatuated with the histories of his friend Burckhardt, partakes of nineteenth-century antiquarianism (cult of the Middle Ages, cult of the

Renaissance, cult of antiquity) which is a projection onto the page of history, now the chief outlet for personal fantasy, of the romantic and/or neurotic yearning to return to one's own past, to the mother's apron string if not to the mother's womb.

The nineteenth-century opened with a crop of great men. Cultured Europe was awakened from her dream of peaceful perfectibility by three of them: Goethe, Beethoven, and Napoleon. After *Faust* rational man was an irrelevance, and after the Ninth Symphony Mozart seemed worlds away; and the Ninth Symphony was Wagner's point of departure. But it was Napoleon who composed the new tune and started the new rhythm, and from this time on every intellectual who is not definitely liberal tends to some sort of hero-worship (the hero is sometimes Jesus). Carlyle is the anti-liberal and hero-worshipper *par excellence* of this first generation of modern men. It was with some justice that a French critic could write in 1850: "Le culte des héros n'est pas autre chose que le résumé de toutes les doctrines contemporaines sur les grands hommes, résumé entrepris pour démolir ces doctrines et les transformer en les ennoblissant." But perhaps "ennoblissant" is not the best word.

II

Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic* outlines the principles of what we may call Heroic Vitalism as they would later be found in Nietzsche, Stefan George, and, to a lesser extent, in D. H. Lawrence, Oswald Spengler and a host of minor anti-democrats. Eight ideas are the core of this atrocious but startling book. First, the world cannot be understood through the old creeds and philosophies; it *can* be understood through history intuitively interpreted. Second, history is an organic growth (symbolised by the tree Igdrasil) which conveniently arranges itself in epochs and repeats itself in cycles. Third, society is also organic; the organism, subsumed under such head as History and Society, is life itself; 'organic', 'vital', and 'dynamic' are the magic words of heroic romanticism. Fourth, organisms die, and periodically there is a catastrophe followed by a fresh start; this rhythm

is not analysed sociologically but invoked superstitiously; Carlyle forestalls Wagner and D. H. Lawrence by appealing to the symbolism of *Goetterdaemmerung* and *Phoenix*. Fifth, the core of a man's feeling (unless he accept death and cease to be a man) must be affirmation of the life process; in this cruel process, courage is worth more than love; the human ideal, therefore, is not staintlessness but nobility. Sixth, the hero, that is, the man of courage and nobility is, Carlyle tells us, "sincere and does his duty," that is, he acts intuitively without the interference of mechanical philosophies and restrictive codes; he coöperates with the "real tendencies of the world" and so becomes an instrument of history. Seventh, the hero faces facts boldly and acts boldly; he therefore prefers intuition to reflection, faith to philosophy, ardor to detachment, reverence to urbanity, temerity to caution, speed to the suspension of judgment. Eighth, the hero's function is dual. He is a pattern for others to imitate and he is also a creator through whom alone history moves forward and life is justified. History is therefore the biographies of great men. The hero is life in all its potentialities. He becomes poet, prelate, king or god according to circumstances.

III

The roots of Carlyle's doctrine are social and historical and the doctrine must not therefore be dismissed by psycho-analytic criticism which finds only biographical significance in an essentially social ideology. Yet, once this proviso is made, we are entitled to examine the biographical means by which the doctrine came to full consciousness. The following factors might form a basis for such an examination: the tradition of hard blows and frontier justice in Carlyle's native Annandale; the Calvinist doctrine of the Elect and the Calvinist belief in theocratic government which Carlyle acquired from his parents; his awkward family position as the eldest son of a mother who was jealous of an older son of her husband's: the mother jealously guarded Carlyle's prestige, while the father was a benevolent despot; Carlyle, grown up, was lonely, always yearning back to the paternal despotism: in Lon-

don his chronic loneliness was exacerbated by his cultural provinciality: hence his hostility to his age; failure (professional, material, sexual) and ill health embittered him and added to the sharp agony of his homelessness: his ambition was long frustrated in its digestive and, probably, in its sexual functions; the death in 1832 of his father and, later in the same year, of his spiritual father, Goethe: his heroes are father-surrogates, and the theory of hero-worship is chiefly worked out between 1832 and 1840; the adulation he received from the polite world; it came too early to leave him unaffected, too late radically to change his philosophy: he became a self-conscious sage whose saws were destined to adorn bourgeois mantelpieces.

IV

Happiness and greatness, says Spengler, are incompatible, and, to be sure, the ideal of greatness has been preached by those who have failed to find happiness. In the end, according to Friedrich Nietzsche a man does not seek happiness, he loves only his child and his work. Since Nietzsche's only child *was* his work, his affections were focussed upon one point; such a concentration of interest makes for good writing but it is more than the human organism can stand. More and more in his later years, Nietzsche felt himself to be "a destiny", not a man but a symbol, not a teacher but a portent. He tried to identify himself completely with his message. The Christian epoch was disintegrating and a new and savage epoch would take its place; therefore he would enact the tragedy of his age in his own life. He would disintegrate but he would preach a gospel. He would be a Dionysos torn to pieces that there might be more abundant life.

Like Carlyle, Nietzsche was homeless. "From first to last", says his sister, "we find the sense of loneliness, of having no home, of being strongly drawn towards nature; a peculiar musical and lyrical mood, a yearning for sympathetic friends, a painful sense of being cut off from all that men are wont to take delight in, to love, desire, reverence and fear." In the 'eighties the specter of madness drew nearer with every year that passed. His despair

after the Lou Salome affair made Nietzsche, to use his own words, a "semi-distracted lunatic", a "victim of megalomania and wounded vanity". His relations with his mother and sister were strained, and Nietzsche probably realized that they had shaped his affective life until he was unable to adjust himself to other women. During this period of tension his mother was tactless enough to call Nietzsche an insult to his father's memory. Nietzsche was deeply wounded. Had not his father died too early leaving the son a prey to women and to feminine ideals and leaving no male vicegerent except a visionary hero? Nietzsche resolved to receive no more family letters but, lacking the necessary hardness of heart, broke his promise. But in the first two days of his last diastrous malady, inhibitions disappeared and his terrible pent-up hatred of his mother passed the censor. This was Nietzsche's last rebellion against the piety of Naumburg, against the fatherless home, against omnivorous motherhood and the eternal feminine.

Against the ruins of his inner self, Nietzsche shored up the ruins of a public destiny. Every six years, he wrote in the middle 'eighties, his life took a step forward, though now, he added, it was crumbling before his eyes. 1870, 1876, 1882—these had been the years of renewal. A final stage was to be expected in 1888. From 1870 dated his hopes in the reform of educational institutions, in a new palace of art, and in Richard Wagner. From 1876 dates his faith in the independent, positivistic intellectual. By 1882 he took a decisive step away from historical actuality to the shadowy superman. The step he took in 1888 led to the asylum.

The final step had been fully prepared. As early as 1883 Nietzsche deliberately removed himself from men, characterising his attitude as *Menschenscheu*. If, as Marx phrased it, a man is the sum of his social relations, Nietzsche was trying not to be a man. He kept himself alive not by personal relations but by a sense of destiny. He was, he thought, a natural force like the lightning of Zarathustra. An essentially chiliastic imagination reinforced his vision of disaster followed by rebirth. In 1887 he

wrote: "In me a catastrophe is preparing". Late in 1888 he resolved to inaugurate the millennium. A memorandum to be sent to all European courts was worked out. Nietzsche wrote to Strindberg: "I have summoned a council of princes to Rome. I will have the young kaiser shot". To his friend Peter Gast he announced: "The world is redeemed and all the heavens rejoice".

After this high talk the words of the Turin doctor who examined Nietzsche are sadly prosaic: "Maintains that he is a famous man and asks for women all the time". Nietzsche was a prey to syphilitic paralysis. In his insanity he sometimes thought he was Dionysos, sometimes he was Christ. The final choice between the two had even yet not been made: masculine and feminine were still at war even after darkness had fallen upon the intellect. The fact seems to offer proof of Nietzsche's proto-Freudian theory that a man's conscious thoughts are merely a fantastic commentary on his unconscious conflicts.

A born artist and prophet, Nietzsche was not allowed to live his life. Society provided no man to father him, no woman to marry him, no credible god to protect him, no fame to flatter him. A thwarted Samson, he brought down the building on his own head; but others, he gave assurance, would not escape the consequences of living in the modern world. In a witty mood Nietzsche once said that he would rather have won a Basel professor than God, and we may add that he would rather have won a woman's love and submitted to a woman's care than have sought out the secrets of heroic power and the mastery of the world. But turning in disgust first from common men, then from the elite, turning from leaders and friends and admirers, turning from mother and sister and sweetheart, turning from his home and his profession, in the end Nietzsche found no chair empty but that of the dispospossessed diety, in which a man sits at his peril.

V

Also Sprach Zarathustra is meant to make you yearn for the superman. But what does this mean? You are to wish yourself

into the seat of worldly power, into the main stream of history, but on the other hand, according to the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence, you are to wish yourself out of this world altogether into the seat of mystical bliss. You are to be Buddha and Cesare Borgia at the same time, a task which would be too much even for Gerald Heard. Here lies the chief contradiction in Nietzsche's thought and personality, and it resembles Carlyle's ambivalence. If Nietzsche is Zarathustra, then Part Four of his book means that nobody but Nietzsche can work towards superhumanity: and a solitary individual cannot procreate. The superman is Nietzsche's dream-child. Also *Sprach Zarathustra*, the most subjective of Nietzsche's work, is his most spectacular attempt to resolve the discord in his mind, to unite masculine and feminine, history and religion, heroic vitalism and mysticism. In Nietzsche's refusal to admit that to be hyper-mystical and hyper-mundane is to try to move in two directions at once is a hint of his failure to define the rôle of thought (his own, for example) in history. It will be said that Nietzsche emphatically maintained that the thinker, the creator of values, is the ruler of the world. This is true. But Nietzsche was also a worshipper of the brute man of action, and he never explained the position of the creative philosopher *vis à vis* Caesar. Had Nietzsche taken over Carlyle's unsubstantiated belief that great men are great in any direction in which the wind blows? Carlyle sometimes said that the writer was the director of men's destinies; at other times he attributes all to Caesar. Nietzsche was equally undecided, and not till Spengler did Heroic Vitalism, in a fit of self abnegation, announce that the sword was definitely mightier than the pen. Zarathustra praises cruelty, struggle, and worldliness, all as a prelude to a prayer-meeting with his animals.

In Nietzsche criticism there have been two traditions. The one consisting of German militarists and anti-German journalists sees only the masculine Nietzsche in whom the German militarist rejoices and against whom anti-German critics inveigh. The other, consisting of generous, all-too-generous, souls, sees only the feminine Nietzsche the pathetic invalid who sought a purely

personal, purely spiritual, and entirely harmless freedom. *Also Sprach Zarathustra* is Nietzsche's greatest work, the stresses and strains set up in it are the greatest, because it is his most serious attempt, as I have said, to unite the dark hero and the fair goddess. "I know both sides," he wrote later, "because I am both sides." It is important not to overlook either side, for to do so is to overlook the struggle for impossible union which is Nietzsche's life, the life of his will, his heart, and his intellect, the life of a private individual seeking happiness and a public destiny seeking fulfillment.

VI

One must distinguish between the published and unpublished works of Nietzsche. The distinction is not factitious. The published works were campaigns in a war against the age, campaigns in which Nietzsche would use any weapon, mystical or Heroic Vitalist, in his struggle against the old ideas, radical and reactionary. The published works were propaganda designed to make enemies and influence people; the most systematic of Nietzsche's published works, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, is subtitled *A Polemic*. Now one of the chief devices of warfare is camouflage, and in this department Nietzsche was so far a master that the kind of people he despised, such as superficial critics, were taken in. Where the soldier speaks of erecting camouflage, Nietzsche speaks of a Foreground which conceals the more significant Background from vulgar eyes. Or, Nietzsche adds, a writer may be said to wear a mask, since his face must not be seen by the uninitiated. Here is a characteristic statement of Nietzsche's not to be found in his polemics: "We take our accidental positions (compare Goethe and Stendhal) as Foreground and underscore them so that we deceive concerning our Backgrounds. . . . All strength is devoted to the development of strength of will, an art which allows us to wear masks."

Ever ready to regard himself as a duality, Nietzsche was particularly fond of regarding himself as a face covered by a mask or a background obscured by a foreground. Interpretation

enters into the discussion as soon as one tries to say which is face and which is mask. Hence the chaos of Nietzsche criticism. The implication of Geramnophobe criticism is that Nietzsche's religiousness is mask, his militarism the hidden reality. Just the contrary is asserted by gentler commentators, such as the philosopher's sister who cites too naïvely Nietzsche's self-analysis:

Dass sein Glueck uns nicht bedruecke
Legt er um sich Teufelstuecke
Teufelswitz und Teufelskleid.
Dock umsonst! Aus seinem Blicke
Blickt hervor die Heiligkeit.

(So that his happiness should not vex us, he assumes the devil's parts, the devil's wit, and devil's clothing. But in vain! In his look, holiness peeps out.)

But the dichotomy of mask and face should not be confused with the dichotomy, already mentioned, of masculine and feminine. The mask was a conscious device, the struggle of masculine and feminine seldom conscious at all. It was not because his message was soft or hard that Nietzsche wore a mask, but because it was too early (he said he was one of those who are born posthumously) and because it was not intended for the vulgar:

Wer sich einst zu verkuenden hat,
Schweigt viel in sich hineing.
Wer einst den Blitz zu zuenden hat.
Muss lange—Wolke sein!

(Whoever is one day to announce himself, keeps much locked in his breast.

Whoever is one day to make the lightning flash must for a long time—be a cloud!)

The tendency of the creator of new values to hide behind the mask of parable is familiar.

Zarathustra was a simple mask for Nietzsche himself. Dionysos was not so easy a proposition: this mask was more like a shirt of Nessus. The last mask that Nietzsche tried on was that of Jesus Christ, but by this time the face behind the mask was glazed with insanity. But these are only the most obvious of Nietzsche's masks. When, in his early campaigns, Nietzsche

sheltered behind the name of Wagner, the great musician was just as much a mask as Zarathustra. In fact Wagner soon began to feel he was a stalking horse under cover of which Nietzsche was shooting some very strange barbs, and since Nietzsche could never understand why Wagner should not enjoy being a stalking horse, estrangement followed. Schopenhauer was another mask, and Nietzsche's strategy is explained by a remark in *Ecce Homo*: "Schopenhauer and Wagner or, in a word, Nietzsche."

In his published works Nietzsche wore a mask which only the discerning could pierce. It is only possible to see him without it in the various collections of posthumously published notes which comprise volumes IX to XVI of the collected edition and of which *Der Wille zur Macht* is the only well-known extract. These notes not only provide more direct statements of Nietzsche's philosophy, they enable us to discredit the division of his career into three philosophies (involving two volte-faces) and to establish continuity and even consistency—if it is consistent to stick to a contradiction—throughout his life.

Nietzsche wished to create a band of destroyers, seekers, good Europeans, free spirits, and when he spoke in their name he was using them as his rallying-cry, his banner, his mask. He wore first the mask of Wagner, but the new era did not arrive. The mask was changed for that of the Free Spirit not because Nietzsche had changed his philosophy but because he had chosen another group of men to work with. He changed only his vantage point.

But no headway was made. Like Zarathustra, Nietzsche found none of his comrades adequate, and in the end bequeathed his philosophy as a free gift to those who should come after. He wore no mask in *Der Wille zur Macht* because the notes of which it is made up were never prepared for publication. Moreover, after *Goetzendaemmerung* (1888) in which Nietzsche wore the mask of the iconoclast and diabolist, there was no mask left to wear. No one heeded the rallying cry, and Nietzsche's situation is correctly described by Stefan George:

Du hast das naechste in dir selbst getoetet
 Um neu begehend dann ihm nachzuzittern
 Und aufzuschrein im schmerz der einsamkeit.
 (Within yourself you have killed what is nearest to you, only
 desiring, it again later, to tremble after it and to cry out in
 the pain of loneliness;)

It is fitting that we possess Nietzsche's final utterances in the naked succinct form of *Der Wille zur Macht*. He flung them upon barren ground and nobody noticed that they were dragon's teeth.

VII

Nietzsche's striving after the neo-Hellenic, post-Darwinian hero is the chief mark of all his endeavor. With the Prussians he stresses strength and Machiavellianism, with Winckelmann and Goethe he stresses classic beauty. His ethics, even when only his masculine and heroic side is operative, are not simple, and only a literary critic with a considerable grasp of the nature of rhetoric and irony can fathom him. One must say of him, as of most people with a sharp tongue; It's hard to know when he is serious. For, though a great writer always means what he says, it is not always clear just what he is saying. I shall try to adumbrate the main features of Nietzsche's theory of heroism.

It is not immoralism in the sense of a simple inversion of traditional morals. In Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Nietzsche would not approve the really 'bad' knight, Sir Breuse sans Pitié, who is a coward and a fool; nor, it is true, would he approve the virgin Galahad, the medieval ideal. But Lancelot, sanctioned by the worldly mores of medieval custom if not by ecclesiastical rule, is Nietzschean enough, being handsome, gallant, capable, and outside current morality. When Nietzsche praises rogues such as Cagliostro, he does so *pour épater le bourgeois*, and as if to say: At least Cagliostro is more alive than the Good and the Just. An unpublished note written as early as 1870 illustrates Nietzsche's attitude:

I would like nothing better than to meet a man . . . a being

of angry greatness, with the bravest eye and the keenest will; at once, warrior, poet, and philosopher; one whom you could imagine striding over serpents and monsters. The hero of the future will be a man of tragic awareness. The light of Grecian joyfulness will be on his brow, the glory with which the rebirth of antiquity—hitherto lingering—will be inaugurated, the rebirth in Germany of the Hellenic world.

All this, except for the hero's *angry* greatness, is pure Hoelderlin, and could now be called pure Stefan George. And this German Messianic hope is, I believe, Nietzsche's most deeply rooted political idea. His subsequent diatribes against Germany prove nothing but his bitterness at the fact that many Germans are too liberal and pacifist for him, and such diatribes are a standard item in all German reactionary writings not excluding *Mein Kampf*. As to Nietzsche's 'good Europeans', they are not precursors of Viscount Cecil of Chelwood. Nietzsche's united Europe can only be united through the domination of the most powerful, and no other candidate but Germany is for Nietzsche possible.

One can distinguish two sets of Nietzschean great men who share the creation of a new era. First there are the Free Spirits of his own day, homeless ones, iconoclasts who will destroy the old and preach the new. Next, there are those who will inherit the Heraklitean continent after the age of great wars and great politics viz. the twentieth century. Carlyle had said much the same thing; and so would D. H. Lawrence at the close of his *Movements in European History*. What will the Caesars of the future be like? Nietzsche's last works are strewn with suggestions, all of them vague and impressionistic. In a sentence one might say: The ruler of the future is a strong man who can face with equanimity the slaughter of millions of the inferior because he is beyond good and evil, an aeronaut of intellect and a capitalist of power.

VIII

The same social and psychological forces were at work in the

George Circle as in Carlyle and Nietzsche. George is characterised by the same ambivalence, that is, just like Carlyle and Nietzsche, he has a Nazi side and a liberal side, and thus becomes a subject of endless partisan controversy. George's poem *Nietzsche* indicates the way in which he wished to lead Nietzsche's teaching—towards his New Love doctrine:

Der kam zu spaet der flehend zu dir sagte:

Dort ist kein weg mehr ueber eisige felsen

Und horste grauser voegel—nun ist not:

Sich bannen in den kreis den liebe schliesst. . . .

(He came too late who imploring said to you (Nietzsche): there is no road any more over icy crags and eyries of terrible birds—now it is necessary to confine oneself in the circle closed by love. . . .)

On the one hand, George transferred the Nietzschean philosophy to the spiritual plane, and the tone of George Circle writings is much more lofty and remote from worldly affairs. On the other hand it is the boast of Georgians that George put into effect what Nietzsche merely thought. For George actually brought together such a group of believers in Heroic Vitalism as Nietzsche had often dreamt of, and the superman, which was never more than a glimmer for Nietzsche, was for the Kreis incarnate in Maximilian Kronberger. Furthermore, George wrote specifically of the heroic rebirth of Germany after the First World War. In *Der Krieg* (1917) he praised Hindenburg who, he said, had saved from destruction what the parliamentary prattlers had disgraced, namely, the Reich. In *Der Dichter in Zeiten der Wirren*, George sees a new Reich arising from the deeds of a hero who marches under a folkish ("voelkisch") banner:

He bursts the chains, refurbishes order on the ruins, whips the degenerates home to eternal justice where greatness is greatness once more, master once more master, breeding once more breeding. He fastens the true symbol on the folkish banner. Through storm and terrible signals of dawn he leads the troupes of his followers to the task of the bright day and plants the new Reich.

The pattern of the George movement is sinister, for is not George sort of literary Hitler, with Nietzsche as his Stewart Chamberlain, Kronberger as his Horst Wessel, Gundolf as his Goebbels, and Ernst Morwitz, now in America, as his Hess? The George movement certainly bears witness to the failure of nerve of which Sydney has recently written and is one of the many cultured groups in the past years which have developed reactionary tendencies at a time when reaction threatens their very existence. There is an instructive parallel also between the careers of George and W. B. Yeats. Both began as aesthetes, both were interested in the occult, both yearned after past ages and consequently after aristocratic friends, both discarded their singing robes for the nakedness of their latest poems which are the most powerful of our time, poems which express a philosophy of courage, austere, noble, anti-democratic, and somewhat perverse.

IX

What is Heroic Vitalism? Its roots are in despair and epistemological skepticism, therefore it despises traditional metaphysics. But it respects the fact and the master of fact, and thereby surpasses pessimism. Its roots are in evolutionism and therefore it is unsympathetic to the stasis of eighteenth-century thought. But is it less a science of biology than a religion of metabiology, a religion of life and energy. Its roots are in the Greek conception of society as a hierarchy. But it announces an end to ideals and seeks to conclude the distressing enmity of power and wisdom by locating wisdom precisely in the seizure and exercise of power.

The philosophy of Heroism in its modern form has its origin in the literary and academic mind, which, however it may pretend to practicality, regards itself as *spectator ab extra*: even Nietzsche's tragic participation in the process was a solitary one.

The strength of Heroism is that it releases pent-up energies, and that it embodies sentiments which the old liberalism ignored, sentiment of social cohesion of which hero-worship is the positive pole and persecution the negative. The emphasis on sentiment, will, energy, emotion, in a word, on psychology, has led to such

an indifference to rational consistency that all but sheer opportunists must protest.

The revival of hero-worship in the modern industrial epoch is but one symptom of the failure of plutocracy to satisfy the heart of man, and unless the rational and fruitful element in it can be assimilated by a more rational and fruitful philosophy than fascism, Heroic Vitalism will go down in history as no more than a portion of European nihilism, a mere segment of the great shadow which the machine age cast over the mind of the artist.

SR

THE DOUBLE HEART

By JACQUES MARITAIN

From ANSWER TO JEAN COCTEAU

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

By John Coleman

ART has trouble defending itself against an impure angel that slaps it in the face, that wants to *make use* of everything for self-love, of the very gift the heart makes of itself, of its weakness even; even of God. We know this very well, my dear Jean, we see this game everywhere, to which the religious awakening in the world of *letters* will give a new sheen, and a new food; for the thin and the thick strokes take advantage of everything.

But we also know that many publicans and prostitutes will precede in the Kingdom of Heaven many just ones who are pleased with themselves. That is the testimony of the Lord. He found there more innocence of heart than in the casuists of the Temple.

What stops short uncreated love is pride of spirit. However showy it may be, the artist's vanity usually remains puerile, and does not reach to that height of sin. He is not sure of his salvation, he knows he pays badly the tithe of mint, aneth and cumin, and that he is no better than the rest of men: mercy has freedom of movement.

In the artist there is a *littérateur*: a double heart, a mummer that would fool God.

There is also a craftsman, sometimes a poet: an apprentice of the Creator.

God does not allow Himself to be fooled; he hates literature. He loved the blue eye of Satie.

Have Satie's mystifications been spoken of enough? In the universe of music they were of the same quality as those of a Saint Philip Neri in the universe of grace. Here is the crucial point: art symbolizes with grace. Between the world of poetry and that of sainthood there exists an *analogical* relation,—I use this word with all the force metaphysicians give it, with all that it implies for them of kinship and of distance. All the errors come from the fact that one cannot see this analogy: some swell the similarity, mixing poetry and mysticism; others weaken it, making poetry into a craft, a mechanical art.

Yet poetry is from on high,—not like grace, which is essentially supernatural, and which makes us participants in what belongs to God only, but like the highest natural resemblance to God's activity. *Our art*, Dante used to say, *is the grandchild of God*. And not only does it derive, as from its pure archetype, from the art that made the world, but in order to have some idea of its nobility one must call to mind the mystery of the procession of the Word: for intelligence as such is prolific, and where it cannot produce another itself as in God, it wants at least to beget a work, made in our image and where our heart would survive.

There is an inspiration of the supernatural order to which the gift of the Holy Spirit makes us willing to submit, and which presumes charity; it raises souls of saints to the superhuman mode of acting which makes up the mystical life. But in the natural order also there is a special inspiration which, too, is above the deliberations of reason, and which proceeds, as Aristotle observed, from God present in us. Such is the inspiration of the

poet. That is why he is indeed a man divine. Like the saint? No. Like the hero: *divus Hector*.

Words, rhythms are for him no more than a medium—matter. With them he creates an object that gives joy to the spirit, where shines some reflection of the great star-filled night of being. Thus he sees into things and brings forth a sign, however minute it may be, of the spirituality they contain; his blind man's glance meets, at the bosom of what is created, the glance of God. The Holy Books, say the theologians, have several literal meanings; in the same way, there are an infinity of literal meanings in the things made by God. Just as the saint completes in himself the work of the Passion, so the poet completes the work of creation; collaborating with divine balancings, he moves mysteries about; he is one with the secret powers that play about in the universe.

Poetry, in its pure spiritual essence, transcends all technique, transcends art itself; one can be a poet and still produce nothing, just as a child baptized into sanctifying grace can still not act morally. Metaphysical ratio: poetry is to art what grace is to moral life.

Poetry is therefore an image of divine grace. And because it brings to light the allusions scattered throughout nature, and because nature is an allusion to the Kingdom of God, poetry gives us, without knowing it, a foreshadowing, an obscure desire for the supernatural life. I remember how Baudelaire put it: "It is at once by poetry and *through poetry*, by and through music, that the soul catches a glimpse of the splendors lying beyond the grave." And he added: "When an exquisite poem brings tears to the eyes, these tears are not the proof of an excessive joy, they are rather the testimony of an irritated melancholy, of an insistence of the nerves, of a nature, exiled in imperfection, that would like immediately to take possession, on this very earth, of a paradise that has been revealed."

You know these secrets more clearly than I. Who has realized better than you all that is reflected of evangelical wisdom in the

soul infatuated with poetry? Poetry too imposes the narrow road, it presumes a certain sacred weakness,—beauty limps, you say, and Jacob limped after his struggle with the angel, and the contemplative limps in one foot, says Saint Thomas, for having known God's sweetness he remains weak on the side that leans on the world. In one sense poetry is not of this world, it is in its way a sign of a contradiction: its kingdom also is in our midst, within us. It is, too, a bit of nothing, a very small thing, a morning light which will grow to the fullness of day; it demands in its own line a real spirit of poverty. It abandons everything for its absolute. It wins its freedom through constraint. It means to have the poet unresistant, heroically docile, but to have his self-abandonment accompanied by intelligence and will, thus making it comparable not to the automatism of madmen, nor to the fury of the possessed, but to the vigilant and free passivity of souls acted upon by the Spirit of God.

All this, however, at the service of a good that is not the Good. From all the masterpieces in the world one could not draw forth a single movement of charity. We would give, Jean, all the poems and all the systems for the sweet repose in love—invisible even to the natural glance of the angels—of a heart united to God.

The point is that art stands in a line that is not the line of man's good. From this comes its strength: it is free of the human, it is not subjected like prudence to regulate with regard to an end fixed in advance, in the mess of the contingent, the indetermination of free-will; art has for its end only the object it has chosen; it despotically dominates its matter. But from this too comes its infirmity. If there exists for the artist a whole organism of spiritual virtues, they are virtues in a certain sense only, yet they are real; they imitate, without achieving them, true spirituality, and the virtues of the saint. This is a tragic condition indeed. The artist knows the hardness of the life of the spirit, but he does not taste its hidden peace, which nothing created can

give. His will and all his strength of desire he must discipline without mercy, but for an end that is not his end.

In itself, independently of the motives that set man to his work, the artist's purity, however dear it may cost him, helps him in no way to save his soul. But it is nevertheless a genuine purity, paid with the weight of the suffering of a created mind, and which represents that other purity; and which, in representing it, prepares it. A slide down the inclined planes of Heaven, a push from grace: the sleeper will change sides, and will wake up with God. God knows the work of men, the reverse side of their effort; everywhere He sets His traps, His actual graces; God sees the tiniest corner of innocence in the heart. There's the pity of God.

Understand me well. As I do with metaphysics I abase poetry only before God. Poetry is not lowered by being lowered before God. I point out its greatness; no one comes so near the invisible world as the sage and the poet, unless it be the saint—who is but one spirit with God, and so infinitely closer to Him than anyone. I also point out the benefits men receive from poetry. Though in themselves of no help to the attainment of eternal life, art and poetry are more necessary than bread to the human race. They fit it for the life of the spirit.

Saint Francis talking to the animals,—when grace restores something to the state of innocence it really restores it. Art restores paradise in figure: not in life, not in man, but in the work created. *There all is only order and beauty*; there no more discord, the spirit and the senses are reconciled, all voluptuousness is poured forth in light, all bodily heat in intelligence, and everything human converges toward Heaven.

Even with regard to sin art still imitates grace. He who does not know the regions of evil does not understand much about this universe. If the stoic is unaware of them (he does not believe in the devil), the saint knows them well. He is taught by

temptation—beside which the paltry practices in sin of so many good young men who are afraid not *to live* are poor scale-practices indeed; with his master, the saint descends into hell. Familiarity of old foes: stranger to evil he knows nevertheless its whole nature and all its recesses. Why? He redeems it by his prayer and his pain. He takes sins upon himself. By means of the Savior's alchemy he transmutes them into charity.

Well, the artist too knows the recesses of the heart, he visits low places. I do not pretend to say with André Gide that they are the most fertile ones, for in the things of the spirit it is virginity that is fecund; yet they have a kind of low fertility.

Just as it is part of the universe of Christianity, where it constitutes the exclusive matter of one of the sacraments, sin is a part of the universe of art. But it is for a false redemption. With it art makes a work, it draws beauty from it: but it is beauty from dead matter.

Art—an illusionist—transfigures evil, it does not cure it. The prodigious sensuality of your enemy Wagner is so sublimated by the operation of his music that *Tristan* calls forth no more than an image of the pure essence of love. The fact remains that if Wagner and Matilda Wesendonck had not sinned together, we would not have had *Tristan*. The world would doubtless be none the worse for it,—Bayreuth is not the Jerusalem of Heaven. Yet it is thus that art parodies the *felix culpa*. It behaves like a god; it thinks only of its glory. If the painter damns himself the painting mocks him, if the fire where he burns bakes a beautiful stained-glass window.

Moreover, should art come to mix with life, it would induce man to seek his perfection, like that of a masterpiece, in the sheer flowering of his nature. This is pure self-deception, to tell the truth. For man has lost the power of attaining his natural perfection; it is a supernatural perfection that is offered him; and "on the road to natural perfection he meets with sin." He is an in-

evitably stigmatized creature: either he bears the wounds of old Adam, or those of the crucified one.

To sum up, art is in-human, as sainthood is super-human. From thence come all the analogies I have spoken of, and this insistent demand for heroism; but also this voracity of an idol, and this lie, and the temptation which seems to trail it through the ages, to ask from perversity an impossible equivalent of the supernatural.

That however is the pretty monster you want to send as an offering to the Lord. "Art for art, art for the people are equally absurd. I propose ART FOR GOD." A motto that is paradoxical yet not chimerical, since the Middle Ages (in their own way, which cannot any longer be ours) were spontaneously faithful to it: the world, it is true, was then exorcised,—the four elements were Christian.

Religion and poetry have their quarrels, yet they are quarrels among sisters. The artist has great trouble in making use, without hurting himself, of a virtue that is too hard for his humanity. But art itself goes spontaneously to God. To God not as man's end, not in the moral line. To God as the universal principle of all form and all clarity. From the moment it reaches in its own line a certain level of greatness and purity, it heralds without understanding them the invisible order and glory of which all beauty is but a sign; Chinese or Egyptian, it is already Christian, in hope and in symbol. And certainly *to paint the things of Christ one must live in Christ*, as Fra Angelico said. But one must first be a painter. An art which does not paint the things of Christ because it considers itself still unworthy of it, or for any other reason, but which snatches real pieces from Heaven and renders "the inimitable sound of the impact of intelligence upon beauty," is the art that from a greater or lesser distance prepares for grace, (for the time when grace will want to make use of it) the most worthy instrument. I am thinking of Satie's *Socrate*, Stravinsky's

Noces, the figures of Rouault and Picasso, and your *Orphée*, my dear Jean.

Church art, which makes objects before which one prays, owes it to itself to be religious, theological. Beyond this particular (and lofty) case it is quite true that God does not ask for "religious art" or "Catholic art." The art He wants for Himself is art. With all its teeth.

You are right, God demands early fruits. One offers Him as first-fruits the young of doves, the ram in all his strength. "He likes the antique, and not the old." Of course, following the academicians is not a way to please Him. He has a right to boldness; pusillanimity is everywhere the opposite of humility. "He will not support," you tell me, "any luke-warmness." That is true. Undoubtedly there will be in Heaven many people who were silly here below; it would be a mistake to think that consequently we must serve Him in a silly way. If sins against intelligence, against art, science or poetry are not paid for in the other world, they in any case are paid for on earth. The children of light, whom the Lord reproaches for not knowing how to cope with things, have had a few chances to find this out.

"Remain free," Father Charles said to you. To many it should have been said: "Become free." And to others: "Become slaves again," according to Mr. Degas' advice. In your case, enough tenacity, enough suffering had already made you win your poet's freedom. I expect everything from this freedom.

"KEIN HAUS, KEINE HEIMAT"

—SONG BY BRAHMS.

BY KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

RIC and Rac, Lola's twins, got up early and dressed themselves quietly before Lola and Tito were awake. Badly buttoned, frousy haired, their wary black eyes gave their sallow sharp faces a hardened and precociously experienced look. They did a song and dance act in the show, in bullfighter and Carmen costume, and tore each other's hair in the dressing room afterward through jealousy of the applause and sheer nervous excitement. But otherwise they were of one mind and spirit, and lived in a state of intense undeclared war with the adult world. Their names were Armando and Dolores, but they had re-named themselves for the heroes of their favorite comic cartoon in a Mexican newspaper: Ric and Rac, two wire-haired terriers whose adventures they followed day by day passionately and enviously. The terriers Ric and Rac made fools of human beings in every situation, got their own way invariably by a wickedly clever trick, made life a curse for all near them, and escaped without a blow. They were in short ideal characters and the first beings the children had ever admired. Ric and Rac they became to themselves and it gave them secret strength.

The decks were still damp and steaming lightly under the morning sun, and only a few sailors were moving about slowly. Ric and Rac went into one of the writing rooms and there, silently, as if by a previous plan, Ric took the cork from an ink bottle and turned the bottle on its side. They watched the ink pour out over the clean blotter and on to the floor for an instant, then silently they went out on the other side of the deck, where Rac, seeing a small down pillow which Frau Rittersdorf had left in her deck chair, without a word took it up and tossed it overboard. Soberly they watched it bob upon the waves, but

before it began to sink, a sailor appeared from just back of them, and they fled with furtive guilt.

They climbed the rail above the steerage and looked down upon a fascinating sight. Hundreds of people, men and women, were wallowing on the floor, being sick, and sailors were washing them down with streaming hose. They lay in the water, just lifting their heads now and then, or trying to roll nearer the rail. One man sat up and held out a hand towards the sailor nearest him, and the sailor turned the hose down to a light drizzle and washed the man's face and head with it, then turned the water on full again and washed his clothes, there on him, just as he was. Another man lay on his face and groaned and gurgled as if he were drowning. Two sailors picked him up out of his own sickness and carried him to the lowest step of the stairway and set him down. He fell over on his side at once. "Let's make him get up," said Rac, and taking off his loose heavy brown sandal, he threw it by the toe. It missed and struck a woman sitting near with a baby in her arms. Her skirts were sopping wet and her bare feet were black with filthy water. She looked up at them and clenched her fist, shouting a wonderful string of dirty words, which they knew, at them, and added a few they had not heard, but they knew the meanings. They smiled for the first time at each other, then listened with all their ears, watching her face work and crumple in fury and hatred. A sailor below picked up the sandal and tossed it back so accurately he hit Rac in the chest, and almost instantly they were seized by an arm each from the back, and a stern voice of absolute authority said, "What are you doing here?" They were dragged downward so strongly they had not time to stiffen their spines, but they refused to meet the cold eye of the young officer, who shook them quite freely and said, "If you do such things again you will be locked up for the rest of the voyage." He gave them a little push, and they ran in silence, with defiant faces.

They almost collided with the dying man in the wheel chair

being pushed like a baby in a carriage by the tall angry looking boy. "Get out of the way," snarled the boy in Spanish, and they dodged around, putting out their tongues.

The dying man sat curled among his pillows and coughed, as he did nearly all day and all night, his weak little beard agitated, his eyeballs mustard yellow.

"Stop here," he said, and they paused while he craned feebly to see the people on the lower deck, a sick pity in his face at the sight of so much misery. Some of the men were getting on their feet by then, they stood jammed together along the walls of the ship and the rail, while the sailors went on hosing down the filth of their sickness into the sea. Then they piled back upon each other, on the wet canvas chairs in their wet clothes, and in the abominable heat a strange mingled smell of vegetable and animal rot rose from them.

The dying man said in a low voice as if talking to himself: "I can only think of how all that sinful flesh must suffer before it shall be allowed to die." He spread one hand over them in a gesture of blessing. "God, heal them, give them health and virtue and joy . . . if only I could touch them. Johann," he said to the boy in a weak but natural voice, "you must help me down there among them, to touch some of those sick, they must be cured, it is not right to let them suffer. . . ."

Johann's sulky mouth curled with exasperation, his hands jerked on the chair handles. "You know you will not be allowed to go down there. Why do you talk nonsense?"

In silence they moved on, the chair creaking faintly. "I forgive you, Johann, I forgive your hard heart and your evil will. You cannot harm me, but I might help you if you would let me."

"You can help me by dying and letting me go free," said Johann, in a low shaking voice, giving the chair a sharp swerve. "You can die and let me go home."

The dying man considered this a while, and then said in a

reasonable tone as if in ordinary conversation: "I promised I would leave you the money, Johann, if you would come with me and see me safely to Germany once more, for a last look. Is that not worth considering?"

"When?" asked Johann, wearily. "When?" the chair wheels rattled a little.

"It should not be long, Johann, in the very nature of things. Do you think I can set the exact date for you? But I told you in the beginning if you would come—"

"Don't go over that," said Johann, "I know all about it."

"And your mother was glad of the chance for you. I renew my promise to leave you everything in my will, though you do not deserve it, you have not earned it; for charity and kind behavior were part of your agreement. But, leaving all that aside, you may now finish your education in Germany; you may not have to go back to Mexico at all."

"I will do as I please," he said bitterly. "And what did my mother care? She wanted only the money."

"It is perhaps true, my dear nephew," said Herr Graf, choking and beginning to cough. He spat into a folded paper box which he produced from under his light rug. "I can see that you are my sister's own child. She was never like the rest of us. She had a cold nature, a hard heart, from the beginning."

"It is time for me to go and ask for your breakfast," said Johann. He broke out suddenly as if he were near tears. "Why can't I have my meals with the others in the dining room? It is making me sick to eat always with you in that nasty cabin. Why can't you sit up here on deck by yourself for an hour and let me breathe? You are a beast of selfishness, Uncle, I say it to your face. So."

Herr Graf groaned and hid his face in both hands. "My God," he said, "go, go and leave me. Yes, leave me alone. God will take care of me. He will not let me suffer for your cruelty. Stay as long as you like. But remember, I

have promised to leave you the money, and you shall have it. Be sure of that. The rest is between you and your conscience."

Johann gave a great explosive sigh and pushed the chair somewhat faster. He was ravenously hungry, ah, he would sit in the pleasant bright dining room among the lively young people and maybe get into a conversation with one of those pretty girls. . . . He would get away from death just for an hour, the smells, the praying, the phlegmy rattle in the throat, the smothering air of old age, whining and clutching. . . . "You will be all right, I will fix everything and you can read for a while," he said, and he felt cold and determined. No, not for any money could he bear another day without relief, a little freedom, just a few turns on deck by himself before he lost control and smashed something. No, not for any money. He eased the chair downsteps with unusual gentleness, turned expertly through the cabin door, opened the port hole, and feeling the half-fainting gaze of his uncle heaping untold reproach upon him, he bounded out again. Half a dozen paces away he was whistling gayly a doleful little tune: "*Das gibt nur einmal, Das kommt nicht wieder,*" as if his heart would break for joy.

David Scott, who slept on the narrow bunk against the wall, was wakened by Denny climbing out of the upper berth. Though his ticket was number one, plainly, he had offered the lower berth to Herr Glocken at once, and Herr Glocken, without any false protestations, had accepted with eager thanks. David, after a quick glimpse, pretended to sleep. There seemed nothing wrong with the fellow except he was a bore. His mind seemed to run monotonously on three topics: women, or rather, sex; money, or rather his determination not to be gypped by anybody; and his health. He got up early and took a dose of effervescent laxative salts, making the same nauseated face after the draught every morning. Then he ate a cake of yeast, nibbling it little by little as he shaved. He would dash cold water in his face and examine the whites of his eyes apprehensively. He had

small, mottled pimples on his neck and one cheek, like a boy of fourteen; he had, by a long round about arrangement through German friends of his father's, got a chance to work with a great chemical manufacturer's firm in Berlin, and now and then he made a vague reference to his future as chemical engineer. But as David displayed an utter ignorance of the subject, and as Denny had thought David meant signboards or houses when he called himself a painter, their topics of conversation had narrowed almost to nothing—unless Denny's preoccupations could be called topics. Herr Glocken said little, but after a few days' rest he seemed in fair health and began to show himself a rather good humored twinkling little man in the friendly male atmosphere of the cabin, with the two young fellows who never appeared to notice that his back was not like theirs. Sometimes they talked German together, making small comments on the affairs of the ship, and the two young men never seemed to feel that Herr Glocken's general experience of life was particularly different from their own. Herr Glocken was at ease. He slept well, and kept the curtains drawn in the morning until he could emerge fully dressed, saving them a glimpse of his unseemly person except under the best disguise he could manage.

At that moment there was no sign of movement behind his curtain. David did not stir, but was outraged to observe that Denny proceeded to strip and give himself a sponge bath in the communal wash-hand stand. "But I have to wash my face in that," he thought, and viewed with horror and disgust the naked brown flesh of the other, like badly tanned leather, all overgrown with sparse repellently curly hair, which came off on the soapy cloth and stuck to the sides of the bowl in a light scum. "If he does that again, I'll stuff him through the porthole," thought David, seething. But he said nothing, and realized that probably he never would. He would wait until the fellow was gone and scrub the bowl with lysol. Hot and nervous, he sat up and felt for his straw slippers with his wriggling toes.

"Hello," said Denny in a cautious voice, "I'll be the hell out in a minute. It's a tight fit in here."

David, feeling that for him it would be a tight fit anywhere that he had to put on his shoes before a stranger, or speak to anyone before he had his coffee, said, "I'll try to get in the shower, don't hurry yourself."

Herr Glocken's head appeared between the green curtains, his thin confused hair all on end. His long face with its Hapsburg jaw was a network of fine wrinkles. "Good morning," he croaked, though not gloomily. "Would you be so kind as to hand me that little flask?" And he pointed towards it, standing beside his water glass. "And some water, if you will please." David gave him both, and noticed that the flask was marked in German, "Every three hours or when required," and it occurred to him that perhaps Herr Glocken was never altogether without pain. Herr Glocken, reaching out, parted the curtains more than he intended, and David noted with intense surprise that he wore a bright red silk pajama coat. Profusion of color in anything was offensive to David, it offended more than his eye, he distrusted it on moral grounds, and nowhere more so than in dress. His own neckties were black knitted strings he bought by the half dozen from sidewalk pedlars, his socks were black cotton, his suits were mottled grey, dark grey, light grey, oxford grey and blue grey, besides the chaste white linen and duck he wore in summer. His favorite palette was a mixture of greys, browns, ochres and dark blues, with a good deal of white, and his favorite theory was that persons who "expressed" themselves by wearing color were merely attempting to supply its lack in themselves, adding a façade that fooled nobody. A great deal of this he knew had been aimed at Jennie, who had been brilliant as a parrot when he first fell in love with her, and she had splashed her little canvases recklessly in geometrical designs of primary colors like wrecked rainbows. She had seemed to be quite serious about it, too. Gradually she had taken to dressing

in black and white and grey, with occasionally a crimson or orange scarf, and she was not painting much, but working almost altogether in charcoal or India ink. Deeply he hoped she would give it up altogether, there was something in her nature that obstructed the workings of his own; when she was painting, he could not, just as when she was in a loving mood, he felt himself beginning to grow cold and defensive, to hold her off and deny her. Jennie was like a cat in her fondness for nearness, for stroking, touching, nestling, with a kind of sensuality so diffused it almost amounted to frigidity, for she almost never wanted to make love outright, as he did, suddenly, violently, grimly, and have it over with. She would drink from his cup and share a fruit with him, bite by bite: she loved to tell him how much she loved him, but she was never happy with him, and when they slept together, they quarrelled. David, in the wave of repulsion he had suffered at sight of Herr Glocken's red pajamas, hated Jennie for a violent second, as he did often, and oftener. And as for Glocken—on deck in daytime, except for his silly bright neckties, his clothes were shabby and worn, his shoes broken. Almost every one avoided him. He scared people off; his plight was so obviously desperate they were afraid some of it would rub off on them. At night, behind that curtain, in the dark, wrapped in his red silk, what did he dream about himself?

Denny was pulling on his trousers, his face thoughtful. "Say," he remarked suddenly to David, "You know that little one with the ruffles on her skirts they call Pastora? Well, she looks to me hot as a firecracker. And she has been giving me the eye, from time to time. What do you suppose it would cost?"

David said, "I suppose about what the traffic would bear."

"Well, traffic's jammed right now, so far as I'm concerned. But I think I'll prospect around a little. We're going to be on this boat nearly a month you know. That's a long time. I'm beginning to worry about the future."

David said, "You'd better try to keep cool until you get to Berlin where they're government inspected, or you may have to go to see Dr. Sacher before you get to Bremerhaven."

"I know," said Denny, turning a little pale, "I've thought about that. But there are all kinds of things you can use, you know. I think I could take care of myself." He went into a worried little exposition of ways and means.

"They might work and they might not," said David. "They can talk all they like, there aren't any sure ways."

"God," said Denny, sincerely. He got up and looked at himself in the mirror and took a last swipe at his hair with the brush. "But she certainly looks all right, healthy, and everything."

"You never can tell," said David, with malice.

"Well," said Denny, "we aren't there yet. If I can ever cut her out from the herd," he said. "They run together so close you can't get a word in between them."

Bebé, Frau Hutten decided, was recovering. She had brought him food when she came from breakfast, and after consulting with her husband, fed Bébé, who made out a very good meal. "The dear blessed one," said Frau Hutten, watching him with pleasure, "with his so fine instincts and feelings, eating his food humbly face downward like an animal; it is a great pity. He is too good for that."

"He does not mind in the least, dear Käthe," said her husband. "He is more comfortable in that posture, on account of the construction of his frame. It would not be natural or right for him to sit up to his food. I have seen children with unconscious cruelty try to train their pets to eat at table, and it was so much labor lost, besides the suffering to the animal. No, I think he does very well, and misses nothing."

Frau Hutten, her confidence restored and her mind set at

ease as always by her husband's words, fitted on Bebé's leash and the three went for a good fast walk. Seven times around the deck was, Professor Hutten calculated, just the right distance for a proper constitutional. But Bebé, who started briskly enough, began to lag on the third lap, and midway of the fourth, he stopped in the grip of his familiar convulsions, and disgraced himself most hideously, then and there. Professor Hutten knelt and supported his head, while Frau Hutten went to look for a sailor who would bring a pail of water.

A few feet away, she heard a shout of laughter, a raucous chorus with no gayety in it, and recognized with a chill the voices of the Spanish company. They had a way of sitting together and without warning, they would laugh, dreadfully, with mirthless faces, and they were always laughing at somebody. They would look straight at you and laugh as if you were an object too comic to believe, yet their eyes were cold and they were not enjoying themselves, even at your expense. Frau Hutten had observed them and she was afraid of them. Without looking she knew they had seen her husband and her poor Bebé; and she was right. They came on in a crowd, sweeping around the forlorn tableau, and as they passed her, their unfriendly eyes took her in from head to foot. Their teeth were disclosed and they were making sounds of merriment. She felt her fatness, her age, her heavy ankles; their slenderness and youth cast contempt on her and all that she was, in one bitter, mocking glance. She found a sailor, a nice big boy with a good square face who was used to seasickness. He said nothing, but brought water, washed up after Bebé, and went away again, as if it were all in the day's work. They laid Bebé beside their deck chairs, folded bath towels under his head, and sat together in massive silence, feeling themselves figures of fun to those debased creatures who should never have been allowed to travel as first-class passengers. There were many good people in the steerage who better deserved to be in their place. In Mexico

they had been accustomed for years to an easy atmosphere, among Germans of the solid cultured class who lived well and were treated with great consideration by Mexicans of the corresponding class. They had never been sneered at for their shapes nor their habits. But as for these Gachupines: the Hutten remembered a Mexican saying the Germans in Mexico were fond of repeating: Mexicans loathe Americans, despise the Jews, hate the Spaniards, distrust the English, admire the French, and love the Germans. A Mexican friend of theirs, an immensely clever gentleman, had made this classification at dinner with them one evening, it had spread like wildfire among their small society, and they had never forgotten it. It was the kind of thing that almost reconciled one to living in a foreign country with mixed races and on the whole rather barbarous customs.

Herr Professor Hutten had been the head of the best German school in Mexico City, where the little boys carried their school packs on their backs and wore round student caps, and the little girls wore black pinafores over their sober colored frocks, their hair shining in smooth blonde braids. Now and again, standing at the window of his classroom in the big solid Mexican-French house which the German colony had bought and remodelled in the seemly comfortable German style, Professor Hutten watched the children walking sedately yet vigorously in small groups, their faces and their simple clothing so immaculately clean, observed the meek looks and the good manners of the German young, heard them speak their mother-tongue with good accent and diction, and fancied he might almost be in Germany itself. Oh, that the whole world might be so orderly, so well arranged, so good in its basic principles! This hope, coming to him as it did from time to time, making him feel a part of a great universal movement towards the betterment of mankind, had kept him alive, as he confessed to his wife. But they had their private grief, their personal cross. They were childless, and would always be so.

The white bulldog Bebé, for nine years now, had lived with them, sharing their lives. He ate sitting on the floor beside the table, taking food from their hands. He had slept at their feet when he was a helpless crying puppy afraid of the dark and missing the comfort of his mother's milk. Professor Hutten admitted to himself that he was fond of Bebé, in fact with his wife he loved Bebé warmly and tenderly and constantly, in spite of the trouble he gave them. To them, there was nothing absurd in their feelings; Bebé, of a nobly disinterested nature, deserved their care and repaid them with devotion. His wife was cut to the heart, he could see in her face, by the jeers and laughter of the particularly base kind of Spaniards they had on the boat. Professor Hutten shared her grief, mixed with indignation and it must be confessed a taint of shame. He did not feel it was unmanly of him to have held Bebé's head, but it was stupid of him not to have a proper regard for appearances, and to have exposed himself to the ridicule of those coarse-natured persons. It was a consolation to remember that Bebé was a thoroughbred English pit bull of distinguished, even perfect, ancestry, he had taken blue and purple ribbons without number in very creditable shows. Now he was a little aged perhaps and out of training, but he was still able and willing to defend his master and mistress and incidentally himself against all attacks. If he said the word it was still in Bebé to spring like a trigger, and seize and hold one of those jeering little black people by the throat, never letting go until his master gave the command. He leaned over the sleeping Bebé and said in a low urgent voice, "Attack, Bebé, attack." Bebé rose drunkenly, scrambled on his feet trying to get a balance, his eyes rolling. He uttered a deep ominous growl, tottered, and pitched forward on his blunt nose, spread out flat.

"What are you doing?" asked Frau Hutten, in wonder. "If we do not keep him quiet, he will be sick again."

"It came over me to test the permanence of his training," said the Professor, with a gratified air. "No, he has forgotten noth-

ing. Ah, Käthe, how blood and training do form and sustain character. Look at the good animal: he will never fail us."

Frau Hutten said, "How he reminds me now of the past, of our life, now we are going home again." She gazed at Bébé with tenderness, but her thoughts were disturbed with looking backward and looking forward, for nothing in the past seemed to be properly related to the future. She was afraid to hope, for things must be very changed, and in ways she could not be prepared for. She said as much to her husband.

"Where we are going," he said, "people and things change slowly. We will be among those of our own age, our own way of thinking and feeling; they will not be strangers to us, or so we can only hope," he added bravely.

Frau Hutten was silent, remembering when the whole German colony in Mexico City went to a theatre to see the moving picture of the funeral of the Kaiserin Augusta Viktoria. They rose in silence as the great hearse appeared, surrounded by its guard of helmeted soldiers on horseback. Then like brothers and sisters reunited at the grave side of their mother, they all wept together, each turned and embraced the one nearest to him. Aloud they had wept in broken sobs and gulps, until the whole theatre was a place of mourning, full of the sound of this homesick, heart-soothing sorrow. They had sung together, "A Mighty Fortress," "O Tannenbaum," and "The Watch on the Rhine" with the tears still on their faces. How near to the homeland they had seemed at that moment, but never so near again, because of what they had lost: the good, the kind, the long-suffering Empress who had been symbol of all they revered in home and family life, the generous hearthstone around which their best memories clustered.

"What will it be like now, I wonder?" she wanted to ask her husband, but she knew he could not answer, and she did not want to disturb his thoughts.

Professor Hutten thought how he had worked all these years, hoping against hope that the day of his honorable retirement

with savings and pension would come, and God in His goodness would let him see again the house where he was born in the Todmoos country of the Black Forest; and now it had come, but he was full of misgivings. What would it be like? He buried his face in his hands, leaning forward in the deck chair, and almost instantly a qualm caught him in the pit of the stomach, and a surge of most awful sickness chased out his comfortable piety. He raised his head, streaming with sweat. "Käthe," he said in a low despairing voice, "help me. For God's sake, quickly, before any one sees."

It happened Frau Rittersdorf saw. But she was much too occupied searching for her down pillow, pure white goose down covered with pink and cream striped silk, which had been sent to her from Germany for a Christmas present by her dear dead husband's dear mother. How she could have forgotten it, neglected it for a moment, Frau Rittersdorf was unable to explain to herself. It was indispensable to her comfort, as the deck chairs were unusually hard, or seemed so at any rate on this ship where everything was undeniably more than a little on the second-rate side. In any case, since she had left it on the chair, it was the plain duty of someone—the deck steward by preference—to have salvaged and returned it at once to her stateroom.

She attacked the steward firmly though kindly. He was a most polite and attentive fellow who spoke with an Austrian accent . . . "Meine Dame," he called her, which she rather preferred to the homelier sounding *Frau*, "it is not lost, only misplaced, and I shall find and return it to you. After all, this is a small ship, and it cannot have got overboard. So do be at your ease, and I will bring it to you very shortly."

Frau Rittersdorf, winding her green veil firmly about her head and knotting it over one ear, noticed those two awful Spanish children standing a few feet away, simply staring at her with a kind of animal curiosity. She returned their attention

with a slit-eyed, disciplinary face, such as had proved effective with her English charges when she had been a governess in England.

"Have you lost your pillow?" asked the little girl, impudently, in a high bold treble.

"Yes, have you taken it?" inquired Frau Rittersdorf, sternly.

At this they seemed strangely agitated, they wriggled a bit, exchanged wicked glances with each other, and the little boy said, "Who knows?" Then they both cackled with unchildish laughter, and ran away. Frau Rittersdorf, considering just what she would do to them if they were in her power, moved over to the deck rail near that pair of young people, obviously American—what was there about Americans that made them so obviously only that?—wondering what they could find to talk about so constantly, as they spent at least half their time in each other's society and one might think they should have finally exhausted topics for conversation. They leaned together companionably, both pairs of eyes fixed on the glittering stretches of water, talking idly, with short pauses.

Frau Rittersdorf did not hope to overhear much, for she was slightly deaf, nor to observe details except at short distances, for she was extremely nearsighted. At the right distance, however, considering these disadvantages, she also leaned upon the rail next the young man and focussing her vision swiftly ascertained that he was younger than she had thought. His light hair was nicely cut, he had a good high nose and a well shaped mouth, and a general, though no doubt misleading, air of good upbringing. His grey shirt was quite fresh but his white linen suit was ready for the wash. The young woman wore a short-sleeved, belted no-colored frock that appeared to have been fashioned from hopsacks. Her face was pale and too thin with high cheekbones and a short pointed chin that gave her a vixenish look. But she had fairly good light eyes and black hair parted plainly in the middle. One of these advanced,

emancipated young women of the Bohemian world, no doubt. Frau Rittersdorf noted that in repose his face was sulky and hers impatient. Suddenly they both lifted their heads and laughed together, and their faces were instantly gay and good humored, a little reckless. She smiled involuntarily at the fresh pretty sound of youthful happiness; they both saw her and their expressions turned blank and a little cool.

Frau Rittersdorf had seen quite enough to convince her that this was an odd, outlandish pair; there was something about them she could not understand and did not like at all. They were not, she decided, the sort of persons she would care to cultivate as travelling companions. She returned to her chair, arranged her skirts carefully about her legs, leaned back, missing her pillow, and got out her notebooks.

She had a poor memory, and a passion for recording every minutest detail of her daily existence,—even to the very hour in which she had carelessly spooned her soup too hot—mingled with scraps of observation, reminiscence, and meditation. For years she had filled notebook after notebook with tiny jottings in a sharp cultivated little handwriting, and as they were filled, she put them away neatly and never looked at them again. Shaking her gold banded fountain pen, she wrote in English: "These young Americans have the affectation of addressing each other always by their full names, perhaps the only formality they maintain between themselves, or perhaps the only hope they have of making themselves known to the public. There is a faint atmosphere of moral slackness in their manner, their dress, I cannot quite place it or describe it. It is more of an *effluvium*. The names are musical, if somewhat sentimental: Jenny Angel—the real name, I suppose, is Jane, Johanna Engel it would be, and much better in the German—and David Darling. The latter is a common surname as well as a usual term of affection among Americans, I believe, much less among the frozen English naturally, though it does seem to be a corruption of the word

Dear, Darling, the diminutive; this would sound as if pronounced Darling since the English have a slovenly way of speaking certain words to which frankly to say I could never accustom myself during those seven long years in London. Naturally I had learned English perfectly in school at Munich, and had always heard it spoken well, and the English manner of speech seemed very crude to me after that. Ah, those years of exile. Ah, those frightful two-faced English children whose affections I could never win, and who could never learn German under any circumstances. Deyahling, the English would call it, certainly, and the Americans, who seem to learn their language phonetically or by ear, as they say, would add the sound of *r*, a letter they seem fond of to excess. It is all quite interesting, in its limited way."

Reading this over, she decided it was too good to hide, but would go well in a letter to her dearest friend and schoolmate of long ago, Sophie Bismarck, highly connected, unhappily married and living in luxury in Munich. Stupid little Sophie's head would spin, as always, trying to follow her brilliant schoolmate's mind. She made a note in the margin, "*Für liebe Sophie*, to be translated in case she has forgotten her English," dropped the book into her large flat handbag and got up to take her walk, nine times around the deck. Exercise warded off seasickness, kept down liverishness, gave one an appetite, indeed there was everything to be said for it, dull as it might be; and the boundless rolling waters of the mighty deep inspired noble thoughts. Her dear husband had taught her all this; he was a man of endless activity, and believed firmly—how right he was—that good health was necessary to good morality. How many times he had fairly dragged her up and down during their Channel crossings, even in the worst weather, when they had to cling to any available support like invalids, the spray dashing over them. Somewhere in the blue sky above she felt that her dear Otto, dead in his manly strength and beauty at the battle of Ypres, was looking

down approvingly at his good, obedient Nannerl, walking round and round the deck for the sake of her health, as he would have her do.

On the seventh lap, feeling her arches fail her in her three inch heels, she rested provisionally on the arm of her chair and took out her notebook again: "If those young American persons are not married, they ought to be. But in that monstrous country, all the relations of life are so perverted, more especially between the sexes, it is next to impossible to judge them by any standards of true civilization." Reading this over, she decided it was unworthy of her. Where had her mind been wandering all this time? She struck it out, and wrote above the thick black line: "Divine weather, if a little too warm, and a heavenly stroll with the pure salt air on my face, thinking of my dear Otto and the blessings of our happy though all too brief marriage. August 25, 1931." She went on to finish the two laps, carrying the journal between her hands as though it were a prayer book. She met the bride and groom also strolling, their clasped hands swinging lightly, both very beautiful in pure white; looking, too, astonishingly fresh and carefree considering the newness of their honeymoon. As they neared, she perceived that the bride, though very serene looking, was rather pale, even a little ill, perhaps. And quite properly, Frau Rittersdorf decided with matronly approval. One had well-founded suspicions of those brides who remained unchanged in appearance and manner after marriage. Even with all the happiness of the new state, still one did not step from virginity to the strains and stresses of married life without visible sign. Say what you will, it is not all roses. She considered this thought for a while and decided it was leading her into forbidden areas; resolutely she turned her mind to higher things.

RAINS

BY ST.-JOHN PERSE

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

By Denis Devlin

To Katherine and Francis Biddle

I

The banyan tree of the rain takes hold of the City,
An early polyp rises to its coral wedding in this milky live water,
And Idea naked like a net-fighter combs her girl's mane in the
people's gardens.

Sing, poem, at the opening cry of the waters the imminence of
the theme,

Sing, poem, at the crash down of the waters the evasion of the
theme,

High licence in the flanks of the prophetic Virgins,

Hatching of golden ovules in the wild night of tawny slime
And my bed made, O fraud! on the edge of a like dream,
Where the poem, obscene rose livens and grows and curls.

Terrible Lord of my laughter, behold the earth smoking with a
venison taste,

Widow clay under virgin water, earth washed of the steps of
sleepless men,

And, sniffed close like wine, does it not truly bring on loss of
memory?

Lord, terrible Lord of my laughter! behold on earth the dream's
wrong side,

Like the reply of the high dunes to the rising tiered seas, behold,
behold

Earth used-up, the new hour in its swaddling clothes, and my
heart host to a strange vowel.

II

Most suspect Nurses, Waiting-women with veiled elder eyes, O
Rains through whom
The unusual man keeps his caste, what shall we say tonight to the
one sounding the depths of our vigil?
On what new bed, from what stubborn head shall we ravish the
valid spark?

Mute Ande on my roof, I am loud with applause, and it is for
you, O Rains!
I shall plead my cause before you: at your lance-points, my share
of the world!
Foam on the poem's lips like milk of coral rocks!

And she dancing like a snake-charmer at the entry of my phrases,
Idea, naked as a sword-blade at the faction fight,
Will teach me ceremony and measure against the poem's impa-
tience.

Terrible Lord of my laughter, save me from the avowal, the
welcome and the song.
Terrible Lord of my laughter, how injurious the lips of the rain-
storm!
How much fraud consummated under our high migrations!

In the clear night of noon, we proffer more than one novel
Proposition on the essence of being . . . O smoke-curves there on
the hearth-stone!
And the warm rain on our roofs did just as well to quench the
lamps in our hands.

III

Sisters of the warriors of Asshur were the tall Rains striding over
the earth:

Feather-helmeted, tucked-up high, spurred with silver and crystal,
Like Dido trampling on the ivories at the gates of Carthage,

Like Cortez' wife, heady with clay and rouged, among her tall
apocryphal plants . . .

They revived with night-dark the blue on the stocks of our
weapons,

They will people April in the mirrors' depths in our rooms!

Nor would I forget their stamping on the thresholds of the
chambers of ablution:

Warrior, O warrior-women towards us sharpened in lance and
dart-point!

Dancers, O dancing women on the ground multiplied by dance
and attraction!

It is weapons by armfuls, it is girls by cartloads, a presentation of
eagles to the legions,

A rising with pikes in the slums for the youngest peoples of the
earth—broken sheaves of dissolute virgins,

O great unbound sheaves! harvest ample and live poured back in
the arms of men!

. . . And the City on ebony base is of glass made, knowledge in
the mouths of fountains,

And the foreigner reads the great Annona notices on our walls,
And there is freshness within our walls where the Indian girl will
stay tonight with the inmate.

IV

Reports made to the Aedile; confessions made at our gates. . . .

Be my death, happiness!

A new language offered from all sides! a fresh breathing about
the world

Like the very breath of the spirit, like the thing itself proffered,

Flush with being, its essence; flush with the spring, its birth:

Ah! full aspersion of the salubrious god on our faces, certain
breeze in flower

Skimming the blueing grass, outrunning the far, far-off moving
dissidences!

. . . Most suspect Nurses, O Sowers of spores, seeds and light
species,

What highway through what fallen heights do you betray to us,
Like the beautiful beings at storms' foot stoned on the cross of
their wings?

What was it you haunted so far we are made to dream away life,
still dreaming about it?

And of what other state do you speak so low we are made to
lose memory?

Did you abandon your beds to traffic in holy things among us,
O Simoniacs?

In the fresh intercourse of the spray where the sky ripens its
taste of arum-lily and neve,

You lived with the lust-leap lightning, and in the resin of great
torn dawns,

On the pure vellum scratched by divine priming, you will tell us,
O Rains! what new language the great uncial of green fire
was hunting out for you.

V

Your approach to be full of majesty, we had known that, city
men on our thin slag heaps,
But we had dreamt of more lofty confidences at the first breath
of the rainstorm,
And you give us back, O Rains! to our human urgency, with the
clay taste under our masks.

In higher places shall we seek memory? . . . or, by the gold bibles
of the lower foliage, must we perhaps sing oblivion? . . .
Our fevers painted on the tulip-trees of dream, the film in the
eyes of pools, and the stone rolled over the well-mouth,
are not those fine themes to work at?
Like old roses in a wounded soldier's hands? . . . The hive is still
in the orchard, children in the old tree's forks, and the ladder
forbidden to the lightning's lovely widowhoods. . . .

Sweetness of agave and aloe . . . Insipid the season of the man
who is without misunderstanding! It is earth tired of the
mind's burns.

Green rains being painted on bankers' windows. The faces of
the womanish gods will be wiped off on the warm cloths of
the weeping women.

And new ideas come on account to Empire-builders at their tables.
A whole silent people rises in my phrases, in the great margins
of the poem.

Raise up, raise up, at promontories' edges, the Hapsburg catafalques,
the tall pyres of the man of war, the tall apiaries of
imposture.

Winnow, winnow, at promontories' edges, the great ossuaries of
the other war, the great ossuaries of the white man on which
childhood was founded.

And let him be aired on his chair, on his iron chair, the man
preyed on by visions that provoke the peoples.

We shall never see the end of it: the smoke of charred history's
exploits trailing over the stretch-out of the seas,
While in the Charterhouses and Leperhouses, a perfume of ter-
mites and white raspberries makes bedridden Princes rise
from their wattles:

"Once, once I had a taste for living among men, but now earth
breathes with the soul of a foreign woman. . . ."

VI

Let the man stricken with such solitude go and hang up in the
sanctuary the mask and baton of command!

As for me, I raised sponge and gall to the wounds of an old tree
laden with the chains of the earth.

"Once, once I had a taste for living far from men, but now the
Rains. . . ."

Fugitives with no message, O faceless Mimes, what fine sowings
of seed were yours at the borders!

For what fine pasturage fires among men do you turn aside your
steps one night, for what stories unfolded

Before a fire of roses in rooms, in the rooms where lives the
sombre flower of sex?

Did you covet our wives and daughters behind their grating of
dreams? (The attentions older women pay to younger

In secretive depths of rooms, pure offices, such as one would think
of for the palps of insects. . . .)

Would you not be better, among our sons, spying out the virile,
bitter smell of their war-harness of hide? (like a people of
Sphinxes, heavy with number and riddle, disputing about
power at the gates of the elect? . . .)

O Rains through whom the wild wheat invades the City and the
stone highways bristle with irascible cactuses,
Thousand new stones by thousand new footsteps freshly visited
. . . Behind windows fanned by invisible feather, make up
your accounts, O diamond-cutters!

And the man, hard among men, in the crowd, catches himself
thinking of the lyme-grass on the sands. . . "Once, once I
had a taste for living without sweetness, but now the
Rains. . ." (Life rises to the storms on the wings of re-
fusal.)

Pass by, Half-breeds, and leave us at our look-out. . . He drinks
of divinity whose mask is made of clay.

Each stone washed of street-signs, each leaf washed of Latria-
signs, is earth cleansed of the copyists' inks. . .

Pass by and leave us to our oldest customs. May my word again
go before me! and we shall sing once more a song of men
for them that pass by, a song of the open for them that
watch:

VII

"Innumerable are our ways and our dwellings uncertain. He
drinks of divinity whose lip is made of clay. You, washers
of the dead in the mother-waters of morning—and it is
earth still among the thorns of war—wash too the faces of
the living; wash, O Rains! the sorrowful faces of the violent,
the gentle faces of the violent . . . for their ways are narrow
and their dwellings uncertain.

"Wash, O Rains! a stone place for the strong. At the great tables
shall they sit, beneath the pent-roof of their strength, those
whom the wine of men has not made drunk, those whom
the taste of tears and of dream has not defiled, those who

care nothing for their name in the bone trumpets . . . at the great tables shall they sit, beneath the pent-roof of their strength, in a stone place for the strong.

“Wash doubt and prudence from the path of action, wash doubt and propriety from the field of vision. Wash, O Rains! the film from the eye of the man of good, from the eye of the right-thinking man. Wash the film from the eye of the man of good taste, from the eye of the man of good form; the film from the man of merit, the film from the man of talent; wash the scales from the eye of the Great Master and of the Patron of the Arts, from the eye of the Just and of the Celebrity . . . from the eye of the men well-qualified, by prudence and propriety.

“Wash, wash the benevolence from the heart of the great Intercessors, the seemliness from the forehead of the great Educators, and defilement of speech from the public lips. Wash, O Rains! the hand of the Judge and of the Provost, the hand of the midwife and of the layer-out, the hand licked by the sick and the blind, and the hand low on the foreheads of men, dreaming still of reins and whip . . . with the assent of the great Intercessors, of the great Educators.

“Wash, wash the peoples’ history from the tall tables of memory: the great official annals, the great Chronicles of the Clergy, the bulletins of the Academies . . . Wash bulls and charters, and the Memorials of the Third Estate; Covenants, Treaties of Alliance and the great Acts of Federation; wash, wash, O Rains! all the vellums and parchments, coloured like the walls of asylums and Lazar-houses, coloured like fossil ivory and old mules’ teeth . . . Wash, wash, O Rains! the tall tables of memory.

"O Rains! wash from the heart of man the most beautiful sayings of man; the weighty aphorism, the purple passage; the well-turned phrase, the noble page. Wash, wash, from the hearts of men, their taste for roundelays and for elegies; their taste for vilanelles and rondeaux; their great felicities of expression; wash attic salt and euphuist honey, wash, wash, the bedding of dream and the litter of knowledge: from the heart of the man who makes no refusals, from the heart of the man who has no disgusts, wash, wash, O Rains! the most beautiful gifts of man . . . from the hearts of the most gifted men, for the great works of reason."

VIII

. . . The banyan tree of the rain loses its hold on the City. The wandering thing to the winds of heaven and such
As thence it came to live among us. . . ! And you will not deny that it's all suddenly come to nothing with us.
He who would know what becomes of the rains striding over the earth, let him come and live on my roof, among the signs and the portents.

Broken promises! Unwearying sowings of seed! And smoke-curves there on the highway of men!
Let the lightning come, ah! it leaves us! . . . And at the City gates we shall show out
The tall Rains striding under April, the tall Rains striding under the whip like an Order of Flagellants.

But see us now delivered more naked to this smell of mould and benjamin where the black-virgin earth awakens.
. . . It is earth fresher in the heart of the fern-brakes, the rising of great fossils flush with dripping marls,
And in the harrowed flesh of roses after the storm, earth, earth with the taste again of woman made woman.

... It is the City livelier in the fires of a thousand sword-blades,
the flight of hawks over the marble statues, sky in the fountain basins again,

And the golden sow on its column in the deserted gardens. It is splendour again on portals of cinnabar shining; black beast shod with silver at the lowest gate of the garden;

It is desire again in the flanks of the young widows, young widows of warriors, like great urns resealed.

... It is freshness running up to the summits of speech, foam again at the lips of the poem,

And the man, surrendering to the upheaval of the great surges of mind, again beset with new ideas from every side:

"The beautiful song, that beautiful song, there, above the vanishing waters! ..." and my poem, O Rains! which will not be written!

IX

Night come, the gratings closed, what does sky-water weigh in the lower empire of the copsewood?

At the points of the lances, my share of the world! ... And all things being equal, on the scales of the mind,

Terrible Lord of my laughter, you will expose the scandal tonight in higher places.

*

* *

... For such, O Lord, are thy delights, at the arid threshold of the poem, where my laughter scares the green peacocks of fame.

ENTRETIENS DE PONTIGNY: 1943

I. INTRODUCTION

BY JOHN PEALE BISHOP

THE papers here gathered as a symposium¹ were prepared for the Entretiens de Pontigny which in the summer of 1943 were held for the second time in America. The poets responsible for them were invited by M. Jean Wahl, who had charge of the week whose mornings were devoted to the discussion of poetry. The afternoons were given over to talk on politics. The initiative to hold these conferences, modelled on the famous Decades which until 1940 were conducted by Paul Desjardins at the Cistercian monastery at Pontigny in Burgundy, was, however, due primarily to the great French medieval scholar, Gustave Cohen, formerly of the Sorbonne and now Dean of the Faculty of Literature of the Ecole Libre des Hautes Etudes. He had the aid of a number of his colleagues at the school, which is in essence a French university, founded by exiles, after the fall of France, in the city of New York. The conferences were made possible by the support of Miss Helen Patch, chairman of the French Department at Mount Holyoke College, who saw that one could not do better in time of war than to provide a place where ideas could be exchanged on the immediate issues of the war, in so far as they are things of the mind, as well as on those permanent concerns of men, who, though driven out of their countries by an enemy whose weakness and strength is that he has always wanted to be either more or less than mankind, are determined to remain within the human domain. Massachusetts has a long recollection of freedom, and it was fitting that these Europeans, despoiled of all else, but still main-

¹This Introduction and the editing of this symposium were the last literary work done by the late John Peale Bishop. The Editor of THE SEWANEE REVIEW regrets that three other papers in the collection, by Jean Wahl, James Rorty, and Bishop himself, had been published elsewhere when the manuscript came into his hands.

taining a free conscience, should be received in the little village of South Hadley.

The four American poets who were asked to participate in the conferences on poetry were asked only that they develop their own thought. But it was understood, these being conferences and not lectures, that they should, when they had come to a close, hear their conclusions disputed and their dearest convictions put to doubt. In the midst of the New England summer—which at its brightest seems no more than a breathing space between winters—we were aware that the talk was sustained, not by the ghost of Emily Dickinson, who, for no better reason than that she had lived and disposed herself for death such a few miles away, did more than once as a name frequent our minds; not by the genius of the old West of Massachusetts, whose living individualism, lonely and withdrawn, seems so often to have been a mere preparation for the self-sufficiency of the grave; rather, with the French all around us, it was Montaigne we felt. He animated the occasion—Montaigne, who was his own man if there ever was one, but who had learned to live with others and to find strength and pleasure in their opposition: “J’aime une société et familiarité forte et virile, une amitié qui se flatte en âpreté et vigueur de son commerce comme l’amour, ès morsures et égratignures sanglantes.” I think we found in the *Entretiens de Pontigny*, as conducted at South Hadley, something of the vigor and generosity which Montaigne sought, something, too, of that courteous quarrelsomeness, without which, he believed, the mind soon grew stubborn, languid and dull through loss of its proper exercise.

It rained the day Miss Moore spoke, so that she and her audience were driven indoors. She sat on a sofa, her papers in her lap, in a prim little room, such a room as the generation of 1910 thought befitting their heritage. The setting gave an intimacy to her talk, while she herself by the modesty of her delivery seemed always on the point of denying the authority with

which she spoke. There is, I should say, no living American poet who could speak with more certainty on precision in poetry; yet, in order not to betray her natural reticence, she constantly called up other voices to speak for her, the voices of the great dead, the voices of her contemporaries, who are palpably not dead and perhaps not great, but only convenient to her purpose. That day, more than any other, we were aware as we listened of our proximity to Amherst. I could readily imagine Emily Dickinson, if she could have left her unimaginable silence, applauding Miss Moore's statement, "Accuracy is first of all a thing of the imagination," and then standing somewhat abashed when she heard her add, "but it is a matter of diction also."

The rest of us spoke out of doors, under the enormous elms of the campus. In the late morning, there was the noise of army planes passing overhead, while the nearer calm of the summer air was disturbed by the trucks that came to remove the garbage from Porter Hall. All was, no doubt, as it should be; for in these days discussions of poetry must hold their own against irrelevant sounds. What matter if the speakers were interrupted? They waited until they could be heard again. Young men must be prepared for war; garbage collectors must go their rounds and bang their cans if they are to carry away the day's refuse; and poets must hold discourse on poetry whenever they are minded to make explicit in speech what remains implicit in their art.

The whole point of the conferences at Pontigny, whether held on the borders of Burgundy or on the western edge of Massachusetts, is that there is a continuity of thought which must at all costs be maintained. There are bound to be interruptions, the dull ones of daily occurrence, the more deadly and dreadful ones of war. They cannot be ignored; but, short of death, the silence they impose need never be permanent.

France had fallen; we were surrounded by exiles from France and other countries occupied by the German armies; some had

come after fighting; some from prisons and concentration camps; some had been deprived of their homes, robbed of their books, despoiled of the records of a lifetime of study; all had come from defeat. None had succumbed. They had kept their courage, as they had kept their gayety, which seemed there as never before, the final ornament of courage. With maimed hands and without the accustomed resources, they had gone on with the work, to which, as scholars, they had long since dedicated themselves. And in doing this, they were guarding that France, whose greatness and glory has been for nine centuries to have maintained the values of man, in the sure knowledge that, however dire and dangerous the circumstances, that man alone is free who is obedient to his own laws.

It is a far cry from this little New England village to the Cistercian abbey in Burgundy, where the *Entretiens de Pontigny* were first held. The abbey was in ruins when Paul Desjardins acquired it from the state and set about restoring it that it might become a center where the tradition of a European humanism could be maintained and perpetuated. There, beginning in the summer of 1910, he received men from many countries, as various in their intellectual allegiances as in their national ties. The only requirements for their admission were that they should be conversant with the French language and known to be men not easily deflected from a free and willing search for the truth. Philosophers like Brunschvieg, men of letters like Valéry and Gide, critics like Du Bos, came to Pontigny and took part in the discussion in the years before 1914.

In that year, the invasion of France by the Germans silenced the talk. It was 1922 before M. Desjardins, smiling but serious, heard under the shadow of his hornbeam hedge, the voices of Europe once more rise around him. Beyond the trees, with their clipped and renewed green, beyond the walls with their restored stones, spread the Burgundian countryside, grain ripening in the nearer fields, the vineyards of Chablis not far away. All was

fine, courteous and exciting with that full play of the intellect in conversation, of which the French have been so fond since, centuries ago, they found that their speech could declare distinctions as subtle to the mind as those which the light of France makes apparent to the eye. There, the defeated Germans were listened to without regret; Englishmen and Spaniards were heard, Swiss, Dutch, Belgians, Italians and Slavs of various countries. Ernst Robert Curtius, who was there, afterwards wrote in his book, *Französischer Geist in Neuen Europa*, that Pontigny was a little Europe.

I was never at Pontigny, though I was much in France in those years between two wars. I write from the accounts of others. Yet to anyone who knows what French conversation can be at its best, it is not hard to imagine what it was like at Pontigny. The subject assigned for the first Decade after the war was "Honor and Fiction." Today the subject seems to us strangely remote, even for 1922, though I assume that it was deliberately chosen to recall the reasoned talk of the courts of Provence in the twelfth century. France had been sorely spent by a war which had scarcely been won; perhaps it was with a sense of depletion from an ordeal that had brought her so close to an end, that the French at that time turned back to their beginnings and the earliest source of their strength. At all events, it is agreed that there was at Pontigny that year conversation, but no argument, the two bearing the same relation as jealousy to love.

I think it will be immediately admitted that, beyond all other people, the French have brought conversation to an art. They are favored by their language, which, as Montaigne was able to say even in his day, is gracious, delicate and abundant. But I think that precisely the quality the French have been able to bring to conversation, which has made it an art, is love. And is that not true of all the arts in France? We miss much; there is seldom if ever after the very earliest age that *terribiltà* which we associate with greatness. But there is always, both in the ap-

proach and in the manner in which the matter is pointed toward perfection, the charm and continuous presence of love. I think of a little painting by Monet, now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which represents a side street in Argenteuil, just as the snow is beginning to fall through the winter dusk. It needs not even the recollection of Argenteuil and of the French winter to know that the actual scene was dreary; yet, in the painting, the truth about the cold street has been made a source of delight.

The French like to talk. And perhaps one should not look for any more imposing purpose behind the *Entretiens de Pontigny*. Art, literature, politics, were discussed, the fate of countries and the future of peoples, the most serious subjects that can today, as always, engage civilized men. But all that was said would have been worth much less, if it had not been said by men who were willing to pit their opinions against others and, without sacrificing their own convictions, give their opponents the same chance to express, though not without challenge, their own.

The pity of conversation is that most that is said, no matter how just, how brilliant, must be lost. I have gathered these papers together in an attempt to save the original exposition which prompted the conferences on poetry. I do not care to speak of my own contribution; but I hope it may be said of it, as I can without hesitation say of the others, that it represents a considered treatment of one aspect of the art of poetry as seen by a poet who has not been inactive in its practice. The comment that followed the reading of each of these papers could not be saved. But the papers themselves seemed to me much too valuable not to be recovered and given whatever permanence print could assure them.

II. FEELING AND PRECISION

By MARIANNE MOORE

BY feeling, I mean emotion; and feeling at its deepest—as we all have reason to know—tends to be inarticulate. If it does manage to be articulate it is likely to seem over-condensed, so that the author is resisted as being enigmatic or cryptic or disobliging or arrogant.

One of New York's more painstaking magazines asked me at the suggestion of a contributor, to analyze my sentence-structure, and my instinctive reply might have seemed dictatorial: you don't devise a rhythm, the rhythm is the person, and the sentence but a radiograph of personality. The following principles, however, are aids to composition by which I try, myself, to be guided: if a long sentence with dependent clauses seems obscure, one can break it into shorter units by imagining into what phrases it would fall, as conversation. In the second place, expanded explanation tends to spoil the lion's leap,—an awkwardness which is surely brought home to one in conversation; and in the third place, we must be as clear as our natural reticence allows us to be.

William Carlos Williams, commenting on his poem, "The Red Wheelbarrow," said, "The rhythm though no more than a fragment, denotes a certain unquenchable exaltation"; and Wallace Stevens, referring to poetry under the metaphor of the lion, says, "It can kill a man." Indeed what I am trying to say, he epitomized in his lecture at Princeton when he said, "It is a violence within that protects us from a violence without." Yet the lion's leap would be mitigated almost to harmlessness if the lion were clawless, so precision is both impact and exactitude as with surgery. So in music, with the conductor's signal, as I am reminded by a friend, a fanatic of rhythmic exactitude, "it begins far back of the beat, so that you don't see when the down beat comes. It was started such a long distance ahead, it makes it

possible to be exact. Whereas you can't be exact by being restrained." In any writing of maximum force, the writer seems under compulsion to set down an unbearable accuracy, to be suffering from a kind of overwhelmed receptivity; and in connection with precision as we see it in metaphor, I think of Gerard Manley Hopkins and his description of the dark centre in the eye of the peacock feather as "the colour of the grape where the flag is turned back"; also his saying about some lambs he had seen frolicking in a field, "It was as though it was the ground that tossed them." When Prior in his *Life of Burke*, says Burke had a peculiarity in his gait which made him look as if he had two left legs, it sounds as if the remark had sprung forth and not been concocted; at all events, precision is a thing of the imagination; and it is a matter of diction; of diction that is virile because galvanized against inertia. In Louis Ginsberg's poem, "Command of the Dead," the final stanza reads,

And so they live in all our works
And sinew us to victory.
We see them when we most are gay;
We feel them when we most are free.

The natural order for the two mosts would be

We see them when we are most gay;
We feel them when we are most free

but that would mean, being at our gayest makes us think of them and being free makes us feel them—an egregious inaccuracy since these two mosts are the essence of compassion.

"Fighting Faith Saves the World" inadvertently became ambiguity, as the title for a review of *Journey Among Warriors* by Eve Curie, since as it stands it seems to mean: by fighting faith, the world is saved; whereas to say A Fighting Faith Saves the World would safeguard the meaning.

Explicitness being the enemy of brevity, an instance of difficult descriptive matter accurately presented is that passage in the book of Daniel (X: 9, 10, 11) where the writer says, "Then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground. And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And I stood trembling." One hardly dares to think what we might have done with the problem if we had been asked to describe how someone was wakened and gradually turning over, got up off the ground.

Instinctively we employ antithesis as an aid to precision, and in Arthur Waley's translations from the Chinese, one notices the many paired meanings—"left and right"; "waking and sleeping"; "one embroiders with silk, an inch a day; of plain sewing one can do more than five feet." Anyone with contemporary pride thinks of Mr. Auden in connection with antithesis, as in "The Double Man" he says of the devil,

. . . torn between conflicting needs,
He's doomed to fail if he succeeds,

.

If love has been annihilated
There's only hate left to be hated.

Nor can we forget Socrates' answer, "I would rather die having spoken in my manner than speak in your manner and live." And there is that very dainty instance of antithesis, in Thomas Watson's and William Byrd's madrigal, "A Gratification unto Master John Case,"

Let Envy barke against the starres,
Let Folly sayle which way she please,
with him I wish my dayes to spend, . . .
whose quill hath stoode fayre Musickes frend,
chief end to peace, chief port of ease.

When we think we don't like art, it is because it is artificial

art. "Mere technical display," as Plato says, "is a beastly noise,"—in contrast with art, which is "a spiritual magnetism" or "fascination" or "conjuring of the soul."

Voltaire objected to those who said in enigmas what others had said naturally, and we agree; yet we must have the courage of our peculiarities. What would become of Ogden Nash if he wrote only in accordance with the principles set forth by our manuals of composition? His benign vocabulary and fearless rhymes could not be a favor, however, if they were not self-impelled:

I love the Baby Giant Panda,
I'd welcome one to my veranda.
I never worry, wondering maybe
Whether it isn't Giant Baby;
I leave such matters to the scientists—
The Giant Baby—and Baby Giantists.
I simply want a veranda, and a
Giant Baby Giant Panda.

This, it seems to me, is not so far removed from George Wither's motto, "I Grow and Wither Both Together."

T. S. Eliot attributes Bishop Andrewes' precision to "the pure motive," and the fact that when he "takes a word and derives the world from it," "he is wholly in his subject, unaware of anything else." The feeling has departed from anything that has on it the touch of affectation, and William Rose Benét in his preface to the *Collected Poems of Ford Madox Ford*, says: "Whether or not there is such a thing as poetic afflatus there are certainly moments that must be seized upon, when more precise language than at any other time, is ready to hand for the expression of spontaneous feeling." My own fondness for the unaccented rhyme derives, I think, from an instinctive effort to ensure naturalness. "Even elate and fearsome rightness like Shakespeare's is only preserved from the offense of being 'poetic,' by

his well-nested effects of helpless naturalness" (quoting CONTEMPORARY POETRY, myself, in the summer issue of last year).

Chaucer and Henryson, it seems to me, are the perfection of naturalness in their apparently artless art of conveying emotion intact, as in "Orpheus and Eurydice," Henryson tells how Tantalus stood in a flood that rose "aboif his chin"; yet

quhen he gaipit thair wald no drop cum in; . . .
Thus gat he nocht his thirst to slake nor mend.

Befoir his face ane naple hang also
fast at his mowth ypoun a twynid threid,
quhen he gaipit, It rollit to and fro,
and fled, as it refusit him to feid.
Quhen orpheus thus saw him suffir neid,
he tuk his harp and fast on it can clink:
The wattir stud, and tantalus gat a drink.

One notices the wholesomeness of the uncapitalized beginnings of lines, and the gusto of invention, with climax proceeding out of climax, that is the mark of feeling.

We call climax a device, but is it not the natural result of strong feeling? It is, moreover, a pyramid that can rest either on its point or on its base, witty anticlimax being one of Ludwig Bemelmans' best enticements as when he says of the twelve little girls, in his poem "Madeline,"

They smiled at the good
and frowned at the bad
and sometimes they were very sad.

Intentional anticlimax as a department of surprise, is a subject by itself and indeed an art, "bearing," as Longinus says, "the stamp of vehement emotion like a ship before a veering wind," both as content and as sound; but especially as sound, in the use of which the poet becomes a kind of hypnotist,—recalling Kenneth

Burke's statement that "the hypnotist has a way out and a way in."

Concealed rhyme and the interiorized climax usually please me better than the open rhyme and the insisted on climax, and we can readily understand Dr. Johnson's objection to rigmarole, in his take-off on the ballad:

I put my hat upon my head,
And went into the Strand,
And there I saw another man,
With his hat in his hand.

"Weak rhythm" of the kind that "enables an audience to foresee the ending and keep time with their feet," disapproved by Longinus, has its subtle opposite in E. E. Cummings' lines about Gravenstein apples,—wall and fall, round, sound, and ground, being so worked into a hastening tempo as to make it his very own:

But over a (see just
over this) wall
the red and the round
(they're Gravensteins) fall
with a kind of a blind
big sound on the ground

And the intensity of Henry Treece's "Prayer in Time of War" so shapes the lines that it scarcely occurs to one to notice whether they are rhymed or not:

Black Angel, come you down! Oh Purge of God,
By shroud of pestilence make pure the mind,
Strike dead the running panther of desire
That in despair the poem put on wings,
That letting out the viper from the veins
Man rock the mountain with his two bare hands!

With regard to unwarinesses that defeat precision, excess is

the common substitute for energy. We have it in our semi-academic pseudo-refined adverbs, awfully, terribly, frightfully, infinitely, tremendously; in the word stunning, the phrase "knows his Aristotle," or his Picasso, or whatever it may be; a contrastingly energetic usefulness being such as we have in John Crowe Ransom's term, "particularistic" where he says T. S. Eliot "is the most particularistic critic that English poetry and English criticism have met with." Similarly with Dr. Johnson's "encomiastick" in the statement that Dryden's account of Shakespeare "may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastick criticism."

It is curious to see how we have ruined the word fearful as meaning full of fear. Thomas Nashe says of his compatriot Barnes—quoting Campion—"hee bragd when he was in France, he slue ten men, when (fearful cowbaby), he never heard a piece shot off but he fell on his face."

One recalls, as a pleasing antidote to jargon, Wyndham Lewis's magazine *THE TYRO*, which defined a tyro as "an elementary person, an elemental usually known in journalism as the veriest tyro." "Very," when it doesn't mean true, is a word from which we are rightly estranged, though there are times when it seems necessary as giving the illusion of conversation or as steadying the rhythm; and a child's over-statement of surprise upon receiving a gift—a playhouse—seems valuable as foreign language idiom is valuable,—"This is the most glorious and terrific thing that ever came into this house"; but Sir Francis Bacon was probably right when he said, "Hyperbole is comely only in love."

I have an objection to the word "and" as a connective between adjectives—"he is a crude and intolerant thinker." But note the use of "and" as an ornament in the sonnet in which Shakespeare is enumerating the many things of which he is tired:

And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly—doctor-like—controlling skill,
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill . . .

Defending Plato against the charge of "allegorical bombast" in his eulogy of man's anatomy and the provision whereby the heart "might throb against a yielding surface and get no damage," Longinus asks, "which is better, in poetry and in prose, . . . grandeur with a few flaws or mediocrity that is impeccable?" And unmistakably Ezra Pound's instinct against preciosity is part of his instinct for precision and accounts for his "freedom of motion" in saying what he has to say "like a bolt from a catapult"—not that the catapult is to us invariably a messenger of comfort. One of his best accuracies, it seems to me, is the word "general" in the sentence in which he praises "the general effect" of Ford Madox Ford's poem "On Heaven,"—avoiding the temptation to be spuriously specific; and although Henry James was probably so susceptible to emotion as to be obliged to seem unemotional, it is a kind of painter's accuracy for Ezra Pound to say of him as a writer, "Emotions to Henry James were more or less things that other people had, that one didn't go into."

Fear of insufficiency is synonymous with insufficiency, and fear of incorrectness makes for rigidity. Indeed any concern about how well one's work is going to be received, seems to mildew effectiveness. Mr. McBride in the *New York Sun*, said of Rembrandt and his etching *The Three Crosses*, "It was as though Rembrandt was talking to himself, without any expectation that the print would be seen or understood by others. He saw these things and so testified." This same rapt quality of intrepid revery, we have in the music of Bach. Is there anything like that note of private grandeur in his *Art of the Fugue*,—that lonely soliloquizing continuity that ends, "Behold I Stand Before Thy Throne." We feel it in the titles of some of his works, even in translation, "Behold from Heaven to Earth I Come," for instance.

Professor Maritain, when lecturing on scholasticism and immortality, spoke of those suffering in concentration camps, "un-

seen by any star, unheard by any ear," and the almost terrifying solicitude with which he spoke, made one know that belief is stronger even than the struggle to survive. And what he said so unconsciously, was poetry. So art is but an expression of our needs; is feeling, modified by the writer's moral and technical insights.

III. THE FIGURE OF THE YOUTH AS VIRILE POET

BY WALLACE STEVENS

I

IT appears that what is central to philosophy is its least valuable part. Note the three scraps that follow. First, part of a letter from Henry Bradley to Robert Bridges, as follows:

My own attitude towards all philosophies old and new, is very sceptical. Not that I despise philosophy or philosophers; but I feel that the universe of being is too vast to be comprehended even by the greatest of the sons of Adam. We do get, I believe, glimpses of the real problems, perhaps even of the real solutions; but when we have formulated our questions, I fear we have always substituted illusory problems for the real ones.

This was in reply to a letter from Bridges, in which Bridges appears to have commented on Bergson. Then, second, it is Bergson that Paul Valéry called

peut-être l'un des derniers hommes qui auront exclusivement, profondément et supérieurement pensé, dans une époque du monde où le monde va pensant et méditant de moins en moins. . . . Bergson semble déjà appartenir à un âge révolu, et son nom est le dernier grand nom de l'histoire de l'intelligence européenne.

And yet, third, it is of Bergson's *L'Evolution Créatrice* that William James said in a letter to Bergson himself:

You may be amused at the comparison, but in finishing it I found the same after-taste remaining as after finishing *Madame Bovary*, such a flavor of persistent *euphony*.

II

If these expressions speak for any considerable number of people and, therefore, if any considerable number of people feel this way about the truth and about what may be called the official view of being (since philosophic truth may be said to be the official view), we cannot expect much in respect to poetry, assuming that we define poetry as an unofficial view of being. This is a much larger definition of poetry than it is usual to make. But just as the nature of the truth changes, perhaps for no more significant reason than that philosophers live and die, so the nature of poetry changes, perhaps for no more significant reason than that poets come and go. It is so easy to say in a universe of life and death that the reason itself lives and dies and, if so, that the imagination lives and dies no less.

Once on a packet on his way to Germany Coleridge was asked to join a party of Danes and drink with them. He says:

I went, and found some excellent wines and a dessert of grapes with a pine-apple. The Danes had christened me Doctor Teology, and dressed as I was all in black, with large shoes and black worsted stockings, I might certainly have passed very well for a Methodist missionary. However I disclaimed my title. What then may you be . . . *Un philosophe*, perhaps? It was at that time in my life in which of all possible names and characters I had the greatest disgust to that of *un philosophe*. . . . The Dane then informed me that all in the present party were Philosophers likewise. . . . We drank and talked and sung, till we talked and sung altogether; and then we rose and danced on the deck a set of dances.

As poetry goes, as the imagination goes, as the approach to truth, or, say, to being by way of the imagination goes, Coleridge is one of the great figures. Even so, just as William James found in Bergson a persistent euphony, so we find in Coleridge, dressed in black, with large shoes and black worsted stockings,

dancing on the deck of a Hamburg packet, a man who may be said to have been defining poetry all his life in definitions that are valid enough but which no longer impress us primarily by their validity.

To define poetry as an unofficial view of being places it in contrast with philosophy and at the same time establishes the relationship between the two. In philosophy we attempt to approach truth through the reason. Obviously this is a statement of convenience. If we say that in poetry we attempt to approach truth through the imagination, this, too, is a statement of convenience. We must conceive of poetry as at least the equal of philosophy. If truth is the object of both and if any considerable number of people feel very sceptical of all philosophers, then, to be brief about it, a still more considerable number of people must feel very sceptical of all poets. Since we expect rational ideas to satisfy the reason and imaginative ideas to satisfy the imagination, it follows that if we are sceptical of rational ideas it is because they do not satisfy the reason and if we are sceptical of imaginative ideas it is because they do not satisfy the imagination. If a rational idea does not satisfy the imagination, it may, nevertheless, satisfy the reason. If an imaginative idea does not satisfy the reason, we regard the fact as in the nature of things. If an imaginative idea does not satisfy the imagination, our expectation of it is not fulfilled. On the other hand, and finally, if an imaginative idea satisfies the imagination, we are indifferent to the fact that it does not satisfy the reason, although we concede that it would be complete, as an idea, if, in addition to satisfying the imagination, it also satisfied the reason. From this analysis, we deduce that an idea that satisfies both the reason and the imagination, if it happened, for instance, to be an idea of God, would establish a divine beginning and end for us which, at the moment, the reason, singly, at best proposes and on which, at the moment, the imagination, singly, merely meditates. This is an illustration. It seems to be elementary, from this point of

view, that the poet, in order to fulfill himself, must accomplish a poetry that satisfies both the reason and the imagination. It does not follow that in the long run the poet will find himself in the position in which the philosopher now finds himself. On the contrary, if the end of the philosopher is despair, the end of the poet is fulfillment, since the poet finds a sanction for life in poetry that satisfies the imagination. Thus, poetry which we have been thinking of as at least the equal of philosophy may be its superior. Yet the area of definition is almost an area of apologetics. The look of it may change a little if we consider not that the definition has not yet been found but that there is none.

III

Certainly the definition has not yet been found. You will not find it in such works as those on the art of poetry by Aristotle and Horace. In his edition of Aristotle's work Principal Fyfe says that Aristotle did not even appreciate poetry. In the time of Aristotle, there was no such word as literature in Greek. Yet today poetry is literature more often than not; for poetry partakes of what may be called the tendency to become literature. Life itself partakes of this tendency, which is a phase of the growth of sophistication. Sophistication, in turn, is a phase of the development of civilization. Aristotle understood poetry to be imitation particularly of action in drama. In Chapter 6, Aristotle states the parts of tragedy, among them thought and character, which are not to be confused. He says that character in a play is that which reveals the moral purpose of the agents, i.e., the sort of thing they seek or avoid—hence, there is no room for character in a speech on a purely indifferent subject. The annotation of the editor is this:

A man who chooses, e.g., vengeance rather than safety reveals his character by exercise of Will. A man who at dinner chooses grouse rather than rabbit reveals nothing, because no sane man would choose otherwise.

This sort of thing has nothing to do with poetry. With our sense of the imaginative today, we are bound to consider a language that did not contain a word for literature as extraordinary even though the language was the language of Plato. With us it is not a paradox to say that poetry and literature are close together. Although there is no definition of poetry, there are impressions, approximations. Shelley gives us an approximation when he gives us a definition in what he calls "a general sense." He speaks of poetry as created by "that imperial faculty whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man." He says that a poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. It is "indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge . . . the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds . . . it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life." In spite of the absence of a definition and in spite of the impressions and approximations we are never at a loss to recognize poetry. As a consequence it is easy for us to propose a centre of poetry, a *vis* or *nœud vital*, to which, in the absence of a definition, all the variations of definition are peripheral. Sometimes we think that a psychology of poetry has found its way to the centre. We say that poetry is metamorphosis and we come to see in a few lines descriptive of an eye, a hand, a stick, the essence of the matter, and we see it so definitely that we say that if the philosopher comes to nothing because he fails, the poet may come to nothing because he succeeds. The philosopher fails to discover. Suppose the poet discovered and had the power thereafter at will and by intelligence to reconstruct us by his transformations. He would also have the power to destroy us. If there was, or if we believed that there was, a centre, it would be absurd to fear or to avoid its discovery.

Since we have no difficulty in recognizing poetry and since, at the same time, we say that it is not an attainable acme, not some breath from an altitude, not something that awaits discovery,

after which it will not be subject to chance, we may be accounting for it if we say that it is a process of the personality of the poet. One does not have to be a cardinal to make the point. To say that it is a process of the personality of the poet does not mean that it involves the poet as subject. Aristotle said: "The poet should say very little in *propria persona*." Without stopping to discuss what might be discussed for so long, note that the principle so stated by Aristotle is cited in relation to the point that poetry is a process of the personality of the poet. This is the element, the force, that keeps poetry a living thing, the modernizing and ever-modern influence. The statement that the process does not involve the poet as subject, to the extent to which that is true, precludes direct egotism. On the other hand, without indirect egotism there can be no poetry. There can be no poetry without the personality of the poet, and that, quite simply, is why the definition of poetry has not been found and why, in short, there is none. In one of the really remarkable books of the day, *The Life of Forms In Art*, Henri Focillon says:

Human consciousness is in perpetual pursuit of a language and a style. To assume consciousness is at once to assume form. Even at levels far below the zone of definition and clarity, forms, measures and relationships exist. The chief characteristic of the mind is to be constantly describing *itself*.

This activity is indirect egotism. The mind of the poet describes itself as constantly in his poems as the mind of the sculptor describes itself in his forms, or as the mind of Cézanne described itself in his "psychological landscapes." We are talking about something a good deal more comprehensive than the temperament of the artist as that is usually spoken of. We are concerned with the whole personality and, in effect, we are saying that the poet who writes the heroic poem that will satisfy all there is of us and all of us in time to come, will accomplish it by the power of his

reason, the force of his imagination and, in addition, the effortless and inescapable process of his own individuality.

It was of the temperament of the artist that Cézanne spoke so frequently in his letters, and while we mean something more, so, it seems, did Cézanne. He said:

Primary force alone, *id est* temperament, can bring a person to the end he must attain.

Again:

With a small temperament one can be very much of a painter. It is sufficient to have a sense of art. . . . Therefore institutions, pensions, honours can only be made for cretins, rogues and rascals.

And again, this time to Emile Bernard:

Your letters are precious to me . . . because their arrival lifts me out of the monotony which is caused by the incessant . . . search for the sole and unique aim. . . . I am able to describe to you again . . . the realization of that part of nature, which, coming into our line of vision, gives the picture. Now the theme to develop is that—whatever our temperament or power in the presence of nature may be—we must render the image of what we see.

And, finally, to his son:

Obviously one must succeed in feeling for oneself and in expressing oneself sufficiently.

IV

An attempt has been made to equate poetry with philosophy, and to do this with an indication of the possibility that an advantage, in the long run, may lie with poetry; and yet it has been said that poetry is personal. If it is personal in a pejorative sense its value is slight and it is not the equal of philosophy.

What we have under observation, however, is the creative process, the personality of the poet, his individuality, as an element in the creative process; and by process of the personality of the poet we mean, to select what may seem to be a curious particular, the incidence of the nervous sensitiveness of the poet in the act of creating the poem and, generally speaking, the physical and mental factors that condition him as an individual. If a man's nerves shrink from loud sounds, they are quite likely to shrink from strong colors and he will be found preferring a drizzle in Venice to a hard rain in Hartford. Everything is of a piece. If he composes music it will be music agreeable to his own nerves. Yet it is commonly thought that the artist is independent of his work. In his chapter on "Forms in the Realm of the Mind," M. Focillon speaks of a vocation of substances, or technical destiny, to which there is a corresponding vocation of minds, that is to say, a certain order of forms corresponds to a certain order of minds. These things imply an element of change. Thus a vocation recognizes its material by foresight, before experience. As an example of this, he refers to the first state of the *Prisons* of Piranesi as skeletal. But "twenty years later, Piranesi returned to these etchings, and on taking them up again, he poured into them shadow after shadow, until one might say that he excavated this astonishing darkness not from the brazen plates, but from the living rock of some subterranean world." The way a poet feels when he is writing, or after he has written, a poem that completely accomplishes his purpose is evidence of the personal nature of his activity. To describe it by exaggerating it, he shares the transformation, not to say, apotheosis, accomplished by the poem. It must be this experience that makes him think of poetry as possibly a phase of metaphysics; and it must be this experience that teases him with that sense of the possibility of a remote, a mystical *vis* or *nœud vital* to which reference has already been made. In *The Two Sources of*

Morality and Religion, Bergson speaks of the morality of aspiration. It implicitly contains, he says,

the feeling of progress. The emotion . . . is the enthusiasm of a forward movement. . . . But antecedent to this metaphysical theory . . . are the simpler representations . . . of the founders of religion, the mystics and the saints. . . . They begin by saying that what they experience is a feeling of liberation. . . .

The feeling is not a feeling peculiar to exquisite or (perhaps, as better) precise realization, and hence confined to poets who exceed us in nature as they do in speech. There is nothing rare about it although it may extend to degrees of rarity. On the contrary, just as Bergson refers to the simpler representations of aspiration occurring in the lives of the saints, so we may refer to the simpler representations of an aspiration (not the same, yet not wholly unlike) occurring in the lives of those who have just written their first essential poems. After all the young man or young woman who has written a few poems and who wants to read them is merely the voluble convert or the person looking in a mirror who sees suddenly the traces of an unexpected genealogy. We are interested in this transformation primarily on the part of the poet. Yet it is a thing that communicates itself to the reader. Anyone who has read a long poem day after day as, for example, *The Faërie Queen*, knows how the poem comes to possess the reader and how it naturalizes him in its own imagination and liberates him there.

This sense of liberation may be examined specifically in relation to the experience of writing a poem that completely accomplishes the purpose of the poet. Bergson had in mind religious aspiration. The poet who experiences what was once called inspiration experiences both aspiration and inspiration. But that is not a difference, for it is clear that Bergson intended to include in aspiration not only desire, but the fulfillment of desire, not only

the petition but the harmonious decree. What is true of the experience of the poet is no doubt true of the experience of the painter, of the musician and of any artist. If, then, when we speak of liberation, we mean an exodus; if when we speak of justification we mean a kind of justice of which we had not known and on which we had not counted; if when we experience a sense of purification we can think of the establishing of a self, it is certain that the experience of the poet is of no less a degree than the experience of the mystic and we may be certain that in the case of poets, the peers of saints, those experiences are of no less a degree than the experiences of the saints themselves. It is a question of the nature of the experience. It is not a question of identifying or relating dissimilar figures, that is to say, it is not a question of making saints out of poets or poets out of saints.

In this state of elevation we feel perfectly adapted to the idea that moves and *Poiseau qui chante*. The identity of the feeling is subject to discussion and, from this, it follows that its value is debatable. It may be dismissed, on the one hand, as a commonplace aesthetic satisfaction; and, on the other hand, if we say that the idea of God is merely a poetic idea, even if the supreme poetic idea, and that our notions of heaven and hell are merely poetry not so called, even if poetry that involves us vitally, the feeling of deliverance, of a release, of a perfection touched, of a vocation so that all men may know the truth and that the truth may set them free—if we say these things and if we are able to see the poet who achieved God and placed Him in His seat in heaven in all His Glory, the poet himself, still in the ecstasy of the poem that completely accomplished his purpose, would have seemed, whether young or old, whether in rags or ceremonial robe, a man who needed what he had created, uttering the hymns of joy that followed his creation. This may be a gross exaggeration of a very simple matter. But perhaps that remark is true of many of the more prodigious things of life and death.

V

The centuries have a way of being male. Without pretending to say whether they get this character from their good heroes or their bad ones, it is certain that they get it, in part, from their philosophers and poets. It is curious, looking back at them, to see how much of the impression that they leave has been derived from the progress of thought in their time and from the abundance of the arts, including poetry, left behind and how little of it comes from prouder and much noisier things. Thus, when we think of the seventeenth century, it is to be remarked how much of the strength of its appearance is associated with the idea that this was a time when the incredible suffered most at the hands of the credible. We think of it as a period of hard thinking. We have only their records and memories by which to recall such eras, not the sight and sound of those that lived in them preserved in an eternity of dust and dirt. When we look back at the face of the seventeenth century, it is at the rigorous face of the rigorous thinker and, say, the Miltonic image of a poet, severe and determined. In effect, what we are remembering is the rather haggard background of the incredible, the imagination without intelligence, from which a younger figure is emerging, stepping forward in the company of a muse of its own, still half-beast and somehow more than human, a kind of sister of the Minotaur. This younger figure is the intelligence that endures. It is the imagination of the son still bearing the antique imagination of the father. It is the clear intelligence of the young man still bearing the burden of the obscurities of the intelligence of the old. It is the spirit out of its own self, not out of some surrounding myth, delineating with accurate speech the complications of which it is composed. For this Aeneas, it is the past that is Anchises.

The incredible is not a part of poetic truth. On the contrary, what concerns us in poetry, as in everything else, is the

belief of credible people in credible things. It follows that poetic truth is the truth of credible things, not so much that it is actually so, as that it must be so. It is toward that alone that it is possible for the intelligence to move. In one of his letters, Xavier Doudan says: "Il y a longtemps que je pense que celui qui n'aurait que des idées claires serait assurément un sot." The reply to this is that it is impossible to conceive of a man who has nothing but clear ideas; for our nature is an illimitable space through which the intelligence moves without coming to an end. The incredible is inexhaustible but, fortunately, it is not always the same. We come, in this way, to understand that the moment of exaltation that the poet experiences when he writes a poem that completely accomplishes his purpose, is a moment of victory over the incredible, a moment of purity that does not become any the less pure because, as what was incredible is eliminated, something newly credible takes its place. As we come to the point at which it is necessary to be explicit in respect to poetic truth, note that, if we say that the philosopher pursues the truth in one way and the poet in another, it is implied that both are pursuing the same thing, and we overlook the fact that they are pursuing two different parts of a whole. It is as if we said that the end of logic, mathematics, physics, reason and imagination is all one. In short, it is as if we said that there is no difference between philosophic truth and poetic truth. There is a difference between them and it is the difference between logical and empirical knowledge. Since philosophers do not agree in respect to what constitutes philosophic truth, as Bertrand Russell (if any illustration whatever is necessary) demonstrates in his *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, even in the casual comment that truth as a static concept is to be discarded, it may not be of much use to improvise a definition of poetic truth. Nevertheless, it may be said that poetic truth is an agreement with reality, brought about by the imagination of a man disposed to be strongly influenced by his imagination, which he believes, for a time, to

be true, expressed in terms of his emotions or, since it is less of a restriction to say so, in terms of his own personality. And so stated, the difference between philosophic truth and poetic truth appears to become final. As to the definition itself, it is an expedient for getting on. We shall come back to the nature of poetic truth very shortly.

In the most propitious climate and in the midst of life's virtues, the simple figure of the youth as virile poet is always surrounded by a cloud of double characters, against whose thought and speech it is imperative that he should remain on constant guard. These are the poetic philosophers and the philosophical poets. Mme. de Staël said: "Nos meilleurs poètes lyriques, en France, ce sont peut-être nos grands prosateurs, Bossuet, Pascal, Fénelon, Buffon, Jean-Jacques. . . ." M. Claudel added Rabelais, Chateaubriand, even Balzac, and when he did so, M. René Fernandat said: "On remarquera que M. Claudel a supprimé les 'peut-être' de Mme. de Staël." In English the poetic aspect of Bunyan is quite commonly recognized. This is an occasion to call attention to William Penn as an English poet, although he may never have written a line of verse. But the illustration of Descartes is irresistible. To speak of figures like Descartes as double characters is an inconceivable difficulty. In his exegesis of *The Discourse on Method*, Leon Roth says:

His vision showed him first the "dictionary", then the "poets", and only afterwards the *est et non*; and his "rationalism", like the "anti-rationalism" of Pascal, was the product of a struggle not always completely successful. What less "rationalistic" could there be than the early thought preserved by Baillet from the *Olympica* (one may note in passing the poetical names of all these early works): "There are sentences in the writings of the poets more serious than in those of the philosophers. . . . There are in us, as in a flint, seeds of knowledge. Philosophers adduce them through the reason; poets strike them out from the imagination, and these are the brighter." It was the "ra-

tionalist" Voltaire who first called attention to the "poetic" in Descartes. . . . To the casual reader there is nothing more remarkable than the careless richness of his style. It is full of similes drawn not only from the arts, like architecture, painting and the stage, but also from the familiar scenes of ordinary and country life. . . . And this not only in his early writing. It is apparent even in his latest published work, the scientific analysis of the "passions of the soul", and it was Voltaire again who commented first on the fact that the last thing from his pen was a ballet written for the Queen of Sweden.

The philosopher proves that the philosopher exists. The poet merely enjoys existence. The philosopher thinks of the world as an enormous pastiche or, as he puts it, the world is as the percipient. Thus Kant says that the objects of perception are conditioned by the nature of the mind as to their form. But the poet says that, whatever it may be, *la vie est plus belle que les idées*. One needs hardly to be told that men more or less irrational are only more or less rational; so that it was not surprising to find Raymond Mortimer saying in *THE NEW STATESMAN* that the "thoughts" of Shakespeare or Raleigh or Spenser were in fact only contemporary commonplaces and that it was a Victorian habit to praise poets as thinkers, since their "thoughts are usually borrowed or confused." But do we come away from Shakespeare with the sense that we have been reading contemporary commonplaces? Long ago, Sarah Bernhardt was playing Hamlet. When she came to the soliloquy, "To be or not to be," she half turned her back on the audience and slowly weaving one hand in a small circle above her head and, regarding it, she said, with deliberation and as from the depths of an hallucination,

D'être ou ne pas d'être, c'est là la question . . .

and one followed her, lost in the intricate metamorphosis of thoughts that passed through the mind with a gallantry, an

accuracy of abundance, a crowding and pressing of direction, which, for thoughts that were both borrowed and confused, cancelled the borrowing and obliterated the confusion.

There is a life apart from politics. It is this life that the youth as virile poet lives, in a kind of radiant and productive atmosphere. It is the life of that atmosphere. There the philosopher is an alien. The pleasure that the poet has there is a pleasure of agreement with the radiant and productive world in which he lives. It is an agreement that Mallarmé found in the sound of

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui.

and that Hopkins found in the color of

The thunder-purple seabeach plumèd purple-of-thunder.

The indirect purpose or, perhaps, it would be better to say, inverted effect of soliloquies in hell and of most celestial poems and, in a general sense, of all music played on the terraces of the audiences of the moon, seems to be to produce an agreement with reality. It is the *mundo* of the imagination in which the imaginative man delights and not the gaunt world of the reason. The pleasure is the pleasure of powers that create a truth that cannot be arrived at by the reason alone, a truth that the poet recognizes by sensation. The morality of the poet's radiant and productive atmosphere is the morality of the right sensation.

VI

We have compared poetry and philosophy; we have made a point of the degree to which poetry is personal, both in its origin and in its end, and have spoken of the typical exhilaration that appears to be inseparable from genuine poetic activity; we have said that the general progress from the incredible to the credible was a progress in which poetry has participated; we have

improvised a definition of poetic truth and have spoken of the integrity and peculiarity of the poetic character. Summed up, our position at the moment is that the poet must get rid of the hieratic in everything that concerns him and must move constantly in the direction of the credible. He must create his unreal out of what is real.

If we consider the nature of our experience when we are in agreement with reality, we find, for one thing, that we cease to be metaphysicians. William James said:

Most of them [i.e., metaphysicians] have been invalids. I am one, can't sleep, can't make a decision, can't buy a horse, can't do anything that befits a man; and yet you say from my photograph that I must be a second General Sherman, only greater and better! All right! I love you for the fond delusion.

For all the reasons stated by William James, and for many more, and in spite of M. Jacques Maritain, we do not want to be metaphysicians. In the crowd around the simple figure of the youth as virile poet, there are metaphysicians, among the others. And having ceased to be metaphysicians, even though we have acquired something from them as from all men, and standing in the radiant and productive atmosphere, and examining first one detail of that world, one particular, and then another, as we find them by chance, and observing many things that seem to be poetry without any intervention on our part, as, for example, the blue sky, and noting in any case, that the imagination never brings anything into the world but that, on the contrary, like the personality of the poet in the act of creating, it is no more than a process, and desiring with all the power of our desire not to write falsely, do we not begin to think of the possibility that poetry is only reality, after all, and that poetic truth is a factual truth, seen, it may be, by those whose range in the perception of fact, that is, whose sensibility, is greater than our own? From

that point of view, the truth that we experience when we are in agreement with reality is the truth of fact. In consequence, when men, baffled by philosophic truth, turn to poetic truth, they return to their starting-point, they return to fact, not, it ought to be clear, to bare fact (or call it absolute fact), but to fact possibly beyond their perception in the first instance and outside the normal range of their sensibility. What we have called elevation and elation on the part of the poet, which he communicates to the reader, may be not so much elevation as an incandescence of the intelligence and so more than ever a triumph over the incredible. Here as part of the purification that all of us undergo as we approach any central purity, and that we feel in its presence, we can say:

No longer do I believe that there is a mystic muse, sister of the Minotaur. This is another of the monsters I had for nurse, whom I have wasted. I am myself a part of what is real, and it is my own speech and the strength of it, this only, that I hear or ever shall.

These words may very well be an inscription above the portal to what lies ahead. But if poetic truth means fact and if fact includes the whole of it as it is between the extreme poles of sensibility, we are talking about a thing as extensible as it is ambiguous. We have excluded absolute fact as an element of poetic truth. But this has been done arbitrarily and with a sense of absolute fact as fact destitute of any imaginative aspect whatever. Unhappily the more destitute it becomes the more it begins to be precious. We must limit ourselves to saying that there are so many things which, as they are, and without any intervention of the imagination, seem to be imaginative objects that it is no doubt true that absolute fact includes everything that the imagination includes. This is our intimidating thesis.

One sees demonstrations of this everywhere. For example, if we close our eyes and think of a place where it would be pleasant to spend a holiday, and if there slide across the black eyes,

like a setting on a stage, a rock that sparkles, a blue sea that lashes, and hemlocks in which the sun can merely fumble, this inevitably demonstrates, since the rock and sea, the wood and sun are those that have been familiar to us in Maine, that much of the world of fact is the equivalent of the world of the imagination, because it looks like it. Here we are on the border of the question of the relationship of the imagination and memory, which we avoid. It is important to believe that the visible is the equivalent of the invisible; and once we believe it, we have destroyed the imagination, that is to say, we have destroyed the false imagination, the false conception of the imagination as some incalculable *vates* within us, unhappy Rodomontade. One is often tempted to say that the best definition of poetry is that poetry is the sum of its attributes. So, here, we may say that the best definition of true imagination is that it is the sum of our faculties. Poetry is the scholar's art. The acute intelligence of the imagination, the illimitable resources of its memory, its power to possess the moment it perceives—if we were speaking of light itself, and thinking of the relationship between objects and light, no further demonstration would be necessary. Like light, it adds nothing, except itself. What light requires a day to do, and by day we mean a kind of Biblical revolution of time, the imagination does in the twinkling of an eye. It colors, increases, brings to a beginning and end, invents languages, crushes men and, for that matter, gods in its hands, it says to women more than it is possible to say, it rescues all of us from what we have called absolute fact and while it does these things, and more, it makes sure that

. . . la mandoline jase,
Parmi les frissons de brise.

Having identified poetic truth as the truth of fact, since fact includes poetic fact, that is to say: the indefinite number of actual things that are indistinguishable from objects of the imagi-

nation; and having, as we hope, washed the imagination clean, we may now return, once again, to the figure of the youth as virile poet and join him, or try to do so, in coming to the decision, on which, for him and for us, too, so much depends. At what level of the truth shall he compose his poems? That is the question on which he is reflecting, as he sits in the radiant and productive atmosphere, which is his life, surrounded not only by double characters and metaphysicians, but by many men and many kinds of men, by many women and many children and many kinds of women and of children. The question concerns the function of the poet today and tomorrow, but makes no pretense beyond. He is able to read the inscription on the portal and he repeats:

I am myself a part of what is real and it is my own speech and the strength of it, this only, that I hear or ever shall.

He says, so that we can all hear him:

I am the truth, since I am part of what is real, but neither more nor less than those around me. And I am imagination, in a leaden time and in a world that does not move for the weight of its own heaviness.

Can there be the slightest doubt what the decision will be? Can we suppose for a moment that he will be content merely to make notes, merely to copy Katahdin, when, with his sense of the heaviness of the world, he feels his own power to lift, or help to lift, that heaviness away? Can we think that he will elect anything except to exercise his power to the full and at its height, meaning by this as part of what is real, to rely on his imagination, to make his own imagination that of those who have none, or little?

And how will he do this? It is not possible to say how an imaginative person will do a thing. Having made an election, he will be faithful to the election that he has made. Having elected to exercise his power to the full and at its height, and having identified his power as the power of the imagination, he may begin its exercise by studying it in exercise and proceed

little by little, as he becomes his own master, to those violences which are the maturity of his desires. The character of the crisis through which we are passing today, the reason why we live in a leaden time, was summed up in a note on Klaus Mann's recent book on Gide, as follows:

The main problem which Gide tries to solve—the crisis of our time—is the reconciliation of the inalienable rights of the individual to personal development and the necessity for the diminution of the misery of the masses.

When the poet has converted this into his own terms: the figure of the youth as virile poet and the community growing day by day more and more colossal, the consciousness of his function, if he is a serious artist, is a measure of his obligation. And so is the consciousness of his history. In the *Reflections on History* of Jakob Burckhardt, there are some pages of notes on the historical consideration of poetry. Burckhardt thought (citing Schopenhauer and Aristotle) that poetry achieves more for the knowledge of human nature than history. Burckhardt considers the status of poetry at various epochs, among various peoples and classes, asking each time *who* is singing or writing, and for *whom*. Poetry is the voice of religion, prophecy, mythology, history, national life and inexplicably, for him, of literature. He says:

It is a matter for great surprise that Virgil, in those circumstances, could occupy his high rank, could dominate all the age which followed and become a mythical figure. How infinitely great are the gradations of existence from the epic rhapsodist to the novelist of today!

This was written seventy-five years ago. The present generation of poets is not accustomed to measure itself by obligations of such weight nor to think of itself as Burckhardt seems to have thought of epic bards or, to choose another example at random, of the writers of hymns, for he speaks of "the Protestant hymn as the

supreme religious expression, especially of the seventeenth century."

The poet reflecting on his course, which is the same thing as a reflection by him and by us, on the course of poetry, will decide to do as the imagination bids, because he has no choice, if he is to remain a poet. Poetry is the imagination of life. A poem is a particular of life thought of for so long that one's thought has become an inseparable part of it or a particular of life so intensely felt that the feeling has entered into it. When, therefore we say that the world is a compact of real things so like the unreal things of the imagination that they are indistinguishable from one another and when, by way of illustration, we cite, say, the blue sky, we can be sure that the thing cited is always something that, whether by thinking or feeling, has become a part of our vital experience of life, even though we are not aware of it. It is easy to suppose that few people realize on that occasion, which comes to all of us, when we look at the blue sky for the first time, that is to say: not merely see it, but look at it and experience it and, for the first time have a sense that we live in the centre of a physical poetry, a geography that would be intolerable except for the non-geography that exists there—few people realize that they are looking at the world of their own thoughts and the world of their own feelings. On that occasion, the blue sky is a particular of life that we have thought of often, even though unconsciously, and that we have felt intensely in those crystallizations of freshness that we no more remember than we remember this or that gust of wind in spring or autumn. The experiences of thinking and feeling accumulate particularly in the abnormal ranges of sensibility; so that, to use a bit of M. Focillon's personal language, while the "normative type" of poet is likely to be concerned with pretty much the same facts as those with which the genius, or, rather, the youth as virile poet, is concerned, the genius, because of the abnormal ranges of his sensibility, not only accumulates experiences with greater rapidity, but

accumulates experiences and qualities of experience accessible only in the extreme ranges of sensibility.

But genius is not our concern. We are trying to define what we mean by the imagination of life, and, in addition, by that special illumination, special abundance and severity of abundance, virtue in the midst of indulgence and order in disorder that is involved in the idea of virility. We have been referring constantly to the simple figure of the youth, in his character of poet, as virile poet. The reason for this is that if, for the poet, the imagination is paramount, and if he dwells apart in his imagination, as the philosopher dwells in his reason, and as the priest dwells in his belief, the masculine nature that we propose for one that must be the master of our lives will be lost as, for example, in the folds of the garments of the ghost or ghosts of Aristotle. As we say these things, there begins to develop, in addition to the figure that has been seated in our midst, composed, in the radiant and productive atmosphere with which we have surrounded him, an intimation of what he is thinking as he reflects on the imagination of life, determined to be its master and ours. He is thinking of those facts of experience of which all of us have thought and which all of us have felt with such intensity, and he says:

*Inexplicable sister of the Minotaur, enigma and mask, although
I am part of what is real, hear me and recognize me as part of
the unreal. I am the truth but the truth of that imagination of
life in which with unfamiliar motion and manner you guide me
in those exchanges of speech in which your words are mine, mine
yours.*

MEDITATION AT AVILA

By DENIS DEVLIN

I

Magnificence, this terse-lit, star-quartz universe,
Woe, waste and magnificence, my soul!

Stand in the window. Fountain waters
Bloom on invisible stems. Soul, my dear friend,
Welcome as always;
Fibrous listener in the darks of mind
Till my confession
Articulate your silence,
Pallas Athene through my beating temples.
Seed, sap and fruit.

You shall see blue arches of emptiness marching into the horizon
Over the yellow and black, the intolerant
Excellency of the Castilian highlands
All rock. And the sky
At its looped height
No pick and rope would clamber me up those impalpable crags
of air!
If I could not talk to you
Fear would oppress me.

The Moroccan traveller says good-night on the marble staircase
That rises round the great hall too blank for ghosts.
Flames in the brazier crouch; the hound chitters;
The traveller's housewife
Like a wife too long shut in a new suburb
Chatters: through her inept words, the epileptic

Sacrifice of black bulls; almond blossom and orange,
Anxious nurture among so bronze, so mountainous waste,
The sigh-spent wavetops of sierras;
Dance, the shell-fish eaten, dance, the stertorous heels,
Sensual asseveration of bare thigh:
I stored her joy in my breast against the future.
Good-night, the husband stands, savouring a well-turned jealousy;
the wife
Goes to him, sleepy and reluctant
Contempt falls like a shadow between us.

Look out at the opened sluices of starlight,
The processionless plains with no
Humid corn or trees suckling or spectacular poppies,
Scarce earth but rock
Harsh as the forehead of Iahveh.

Nothing between
Rock and sky.
Santa Teresa
Her choirs of leaf-faced monks
Quavering like plainchant
Chanting to God to down
The devil, his works and pomps.
The blue, absolute blow
Of linear Castilian night
Cleaves earth and heaven,
God being star-froze heaven
And Devil, fluent earth.
O Santa, Santa Teresa,
Covetous, burning virgin!
Scorning to nourish body's
Farmlands with soul's
Modulating rains,

You lost your eyes' rich holdings
To rubble, snakes and swine
And like the sceptical miser
You lost the usufruct
Of heaven, this floral life,
Hoarding to hasten it over
Death's barren, coughing border.

II

With fruitful diminution of my light,
Like Eve accomplisht out of Adam's side,
Soul glides, a glow of flesh, from out its packing.
Much have you left me thus, only to clear me
When chattels and truck of life too much have cumbered,
You, at once the radiance and the kindling
Of dream and deed sown in my travelling.
What is your word for me?
I hear: it is the seed, the sap, the fruit
All flowering in a doomed and sunny moment
From summer to summer; and you bring me
Comfort, my viaticum, journey-food

Even though the full savour
Is edged with mortality;
And though your saving presence
Is never a promise, comes without warning,
Or, being most wanted, fails:
Yet, soul, my long foreboding of the bone
And my green fire fermenting under loam
During the building, eating and sleeping,
When there is no actual advertence,
Thinking, not thinking, thinking of you
In a street of wheaten sunlight, in love's body,

In the look of an old, bleak man
Nearing death
His shut coffer of fear under his arm;
Or when I see in front of the sky a great sunny angel
Leaning on his elbows over a mountain,
Well may you come
My self, seed of my suffering, seed
Of my want
Fallen by the wayside
Fallen among thorns, seed
Of my faith, my hope and my love!

Do you remember how, one night,
Staring up at the Milky Way,
Simplified like a parish registry recording only life and death
With an ink-dim memory leafing back the centuries,
I watched the innumerable, witless cortège of the dead
Floating mute and baffled, they had died
All their desires fresh on their hastening lips,
They had gone out the door of life between two calls;
And I thought of the sigh of birdsong, stop and woodwind of
Starlings all up and down the green mile in the Ramblas,
While the stars wrinkled like crabapples with humourous, blue
eyes;

O dead! O dead deprived! whose grief, filling my heart,
Called out for any reason for your rapt,
But called in alien silence, sensitive to
The hale and have of my humanity:
There, as I looked, so all a pity moved me
Groaning, I turned away with clenched fists
And there were you again,
Toothless, bald and smiling.

COLLOQUY IN BLACK ROCK CONNECTICUT

BY ROBERT LOWELL

Here the jack-hammer jabs into the ocean;
My heart, you race and stagger and demand,
More blood-gangs for your nigger-brass percussions,
Till I, the stunned machine of your devotion,
Clanging upon this cymbal of a hand,
Am rattled screw and footloose. All discussions

End in the mud-flat detritus of death.
My heart beat faster, faster. In Black Mud
Hungarian mechanics give their blood
For Martyre Stephen who was stoned to death.

Black Mud, a name to conjure with: O mud
For watermelons gutted to the crust,
Mud for the mole-tide harbor, mud for mouse,
Mud for the armored Diesel fishing tubs that thud,
A year and a day, to wind and tide; the dust
Is on this skipping heart that breaks my house,

House of Our Savior, who was hanged till death.
My heart, beat faster, faster. In Black Mud
Martyre Stephen was broken down to blood:
Our ransom is the rubble of his death.

Christ walks on water. In Black Mud,
Darts the Kingfisher. On Corpus Christi, heart,
Over the drum-beat of St. Stephen's choir
I heard Him, Stupor Mundi, and the mud
Flew from His burning wings and beak, my heart,
The blue Kingfisher dives on you through fire.

TWO POEMS

By NORMAN MACLEOD

CHARLES BROCKWAY HALE

A man's warm image (eventful before
And after death) finely fluid, is gathered
From the five true corners of his heritage:

A river which takes its source from every world
And to which it goes in the end, his name known
Wherever its moment passed and was the last moment.

A man is like a perfect river is like a tree
Deriving from an original confluence, is balanced
Between time and space in peril and in good and then,
Richly residual, returns to that first residence—
His hand was veined as is a leaf and every
Line was tender in his face; the leaf
Is folded and the hand at rest, but his eyes
Still shine like kindness from the past.

River and tree are principled perhaps
But too precise for a man who was
Our good, and is our life.

A MAN'S HOUSE

I shall grow old, hair like a rat's nest
Whose red eyes in the brain
Glare through resistant sockets at marching men;
In order to persist, I will grow old
Becoming the veined map of my own route
Not even my unborn children will hear about
In the heat and hurt of my flesh. The rats
In my blood run riot, Fraternity, fear,
Caged in iron and hostile world:
The rib aches that was Eve
And all the shank and stone of me grieves.

ARISTOTLE AND THE "NEW CRITICISM"

By HOYT TROWBRIDGE

I

A new technique of literary criticism has been developed within the last few years at the University of Chicago. Though but little read outside academic circles, the writings of the Chicago group have large and significant implications both for scholarly study and for popular criticism. Their ideas are bold, incisive, and revolutionary: they offer a sweeping reinterpretation of existing critical procedures and in competition with these propose a radically different method of their own. If accepted, these views would transform the whole character of our approach to poetry. Certainly these writers deserve to be more widely known and considered than they have been.

The Chicago writers are especially remarkable for their emphasis on critical method. In any field of inquiry, they contend, results are conditioned by the nature of the critic's instrument, his tools of analysis and his criteria of judgment. To understand any kind of criticism we must, therefore, become aware of its method, must recognize its underlying, often merely implicit, formative assumptions. Until this is done, we judge our critics superficially—by results alone, without understanding.

In the long history of criticism, the writers at Chicago find two fundamentally different approaches to poetry. The method they themselves defend is that of Aristotle. His technique of literary analysis was a special method, not suitable to every kind of inquiry but peculiar to poetics; it was designed specifically to consider a particular subject matter and to deal with a particular kind of problem. The method is inductive and analytical. The second approach, and by far the more common, is the "dia-

lectual" method of Plato. This is the method of almost all the standard critics, including the "New Critics" of the past ten or fifteen years. This approach is speculative and *a priori*. It is a general method, applicable to any field of study, and was used by Plato not only in discussing poetry but in considering every kind of problem. Its characteristic features are explained in Books V and VII of the *Republic* and are analyzed more critically by Aristotle in the *Topics* and elsewhere; Professor McKeon of Chicago expounds the method very clearly in his *Basic Works of Aristotle*.

The differences between the two approaches are radical and uncompromisable. They differ in conception, differ in operation, and differ in their practical results. As Professor McKeon has said:

The Platonic and the Aristotelian approaches to the consideration of art differ not in the manner of two doctrines which contradict each other, but rather in the manner of two approaches which are mutually incommensurable.

Debate as to their relative merits is, therefore, somewhat profitless. What is important is the fact that they differ, and that both exist. The Platonic method, which is familiar to everyone, which we take in almost with the air we breathe, is not the only possible method; another approach to poetry, scarcely heard of in our time, is available and should be understood.

II

Plato's criticism was not in a strict sense a literary criticism. He wrote about poems but did not treat them *as* poems—as works of art with characteristics and values peculiar to them as such. For Plato, everything necessarily involved all other things. He perceived, and tried by his dialectic to reveal, the One behind the Many. The good, the beautiful, and the true were all at last the same, and phenomena were to be valued as

they participated in the one universal good. Thus aesthetic questions were not separable from moral questions, and neither could be separated from questions of being or existence. Poetry in general was condemned, on metaphysical grounds, because as an imitation of an imitation it was "thrice removed" from true reality. Particular poets were condemned, on ethical grounds, because they misrepresented the nature and conduct of the gods. In short, Plato believed in the unity of knowledge, in the final identity of aesthetics, metaphysics, and ethics; and on this view a separate critical discipline, even if attainable, is clearly not to be desired. Criticism for the Platonist is general philosophy applied to literary works.

For Aristotle, on the other hand, the first rule of procedure was "one thing at a time"—or as Professor Crane has put it, "Divide and conquer." He divided human knowledge into a series of separate sciences, each having its own object of inquiry, its own principles, methods, criteria, and terminology; in other words, its special point of view. Of course the same material might be considered from various points of view, but not at the same time; for the principles which governed the analysis were different in the different sciences. Each was systematic and coherent within its own terms, and it was this separation between them which made solid results possible. Criticism for Aristotle was, therefore, neither ethics nor metaphysics but *poetics*—the science of poetry as poetry. Professor McKeon describes it as "an examination of poetry in itself, not in its relation to education, morals, statesmanship, nature, or being." In this sense Aristotelian criticism is in truth a literary criticism.

Criticism since the Greeks might be described as one long attempt to achieve Aristotle's results by the use of Plato's method. Men in almost every age have wanted to practice a truly literary criticism, but they have always tried to attain it along Platonic lines. Beginning from Plato's criterion of value, in which all knowledge was subsumed, critics have continually nar-

rowed this principle until little remains of the original all-inclusive Idea. Yet what is left is still a Platonic universal, and still extra-literary; a criticism of poetry as poetry is still unattained. Aristotle's success was entirely dependent upon his own very un-Platonic method, and the attempt to emulate him by dialectical techniques has always been unsuccessful.

The ancient successors of Plato and Aristotle were of three main types. Horace, eschewing metaphysics altogether, defended poetry on ethical grounds—at best as a teacher, and at the least as an innocent pleasure. For Longinus, a little later, poetry was an ecstasy of soul, a state of mind in the poet communicated to the reader through words. Criticism on this view is psychological; it is an appreciation of the poet's soul as revealed in his poem. The third kind of ancient critic, represented by the Hellenistic rhetoricians, seems to be more truly literary, for these writers were concerned mainly with questions of style and literary technique. But the distinctions they drew between the language of poetry and the language of prose were dialectical distinctions, distinctions of degree only, so that art was not effectively isolated from other things, and their ultimate criteria of value were universal qualities of language. Like Horace and Longinus, they found poetic value outside the poem, in something beyond and different from art. In effect, all three were anti-Platonic Platonists.

Criticism since the Renaissance has fluctuated among the same three types. At the risk of a considerable oversimplification, one might say that the historic tendency has been from Horace, through Longinus, to the Greek and Latin rhetoricians—from ethics, through psychology, to stylistic. But of course there has been much overlapping in time and many attempts to synthesize the three main types of Platonic approach.

Humanist and neo-classical criticism was mainly Horatian, with a large admixture of the rhetorical. In the sixteenth century, poetry was often defined as an imitation of the ideal, of things

as they might be and should be. The poet was, then, "the true popular philosopher," as Sidney claimed in his famous *Defense*. Later critics, subordinating instruction, chose to emphasize Horace's alternative end, the reader's pleasure; this was the guiding principle of Dryden, Pope, and Johnson. The nineteenth century saw a return to ethics in the criticism of Shelley and Arnold, and criticism of this kind, which judges poems as guides to moral action, has continued into our own time in the work of Babbitt and other neo-humanists, and in the Marxist critics. For all these writers, different though they are, the locus of poetic value is not in the work (as a thing to be appreciated for itself) but in its effect upon the audience. In this broad sense they are Horatian.

The second or Longinian phase of modern criticism began in the late seventeenth century and became more common in the eighteenth, but its golden age was the nineteenth century. Coleridge was its greatest spokesman. In Coleridge and Wordsworth we see the beginnings of a characteristic modern tendency, the attempt to found a literary criticism on the distinction between poetry and science—"matter of fact, or science," as Wordsworth called it. This distinction, which Coleridge made in terms of purpose, led him to discard or subordinate ethical standards as non-essential to poetry. Thus he moved a step farther than the Horatian critics from the original all-inclusive Platonic standard.

But Coleridge did not succeed in defining poetry intrinsically, in terms specific to it, nor in judging poems by exclusively poetic standards. He thought of poetry as an essence or universal quality partially embodied in particular poetic works; it was recognizable by its "balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities." The true locus of poetry was the Imagination, the fusing and synthesizing power in the mind of the poet through which all the faculties of the soul were brought into harmonious activity, each subordinated to the other "according to their relative worth and dignity." Since poetry was an event

or quality in the mind, literary judgments were to be determined by "fixed canons of criticism, previously established and deduced from the nature of man." On this view, as Coleridge perfectly understood, poetry was essentially lyric and expressive; its values were guaranteed by philosophical psychology.

Coleridge was the greatest but not by any means the last of the Longinian critics. Arnold, for example, fused the ethical principle that poetry is a criticism of life with the psychological principle that it must express a "high and excellent seriousness" of soul. A more recent version of this approach is found in T. S. Eliot, who conceives of poetry as an expression, through some "objective correlative," of the poet's sensibility, his quality or state of mind.

The shadow of Coleridge and Longinus stretches out even beyond Eliot. When they have not followed Babbitt, most critics in recent years have modelled themselves on Eliot, and through him, by inheritance if not directly, on Coleridge and Longinus. The dialectical method, in its Coleridgean version, appears very clearly in the well-known work by Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*. In his third chapter Mr. Brooks states that poetry is "essentially one," that different kinds of poetry differ only in degree of poeticity, and that the metaphysical variety comes closest to the ideal. As in most critics since Wordsworth, poetry is defined by its opposition to science; science deals with truth ("matter of fact, or science") and leads to action, but poetry is "an organization of experience" and an end in itself. The best poetry, the metaphysical and symbolist, is that which is most *mature*—the "poetry of synthesis" which is invulnerable to irony because it unites the most varied impulses and feelings. This criterion is applied in the course of the book to many different poets and poems; they are judged by the degrees to which they reflect the Idea of Poetry, as Mr. Brooks has defined it. Thus Keats is praised because he "can be brought under the general principles of symbolist-metaphysical poetry"

while Shelley is condemned because, when "measured by the same principles," he comes off badly.

For Mr. Brooks, as for Coleridge, poetry is a psychological event, a fusion of powers, faculties, or feelings. But Mr. Brooks, a good modern, does not share Coleridge's faith in philosophical psychology. He can, therefore, derive his canons of criticism only from vague concepts like maturity, heterogeneity, or fullness of human experience, for which it would be difficult indeed to find any solid basis in general philosophy. It is true, as Allen Tate has remarked, that "Chapter XIV of *Biographia Literaria* has been the background of criticism for more than a hundred years." But the tradition of Coleridge and Longinus is much diluted in its latest representatives.

This fact perhaps accounts in part for the rise of a new mode of criticism. This third phase in the development of modern criticism, the stylistic, also has its roots in Wordsworth's distinction between poetry and science, but the definition is framed in linguistic rather than psychological terms. Poetry and science (which in this type of criticism is considered identical with *prose*) are distinguished as two different modes of discourse, two different ways of using language. As in the Longinian critics, the definition is dialectical: that is to say, the terms are defined not literally and absolutely, but only in the context of a dichotomy. Poetry and prose are opposites, but neither is to be found in a pure state; the ideal is always a mixture or fusion of the two.

The clearest familiar example of the stylistic mode of criticism is furnished by two essays of Allen Tate's: "Literature as Knowledge" and "Tension in Poetry," both included in his recent book, *Reason in Madness*. Mr. Tate, like so many writers in all periods, would like to have a criticism which is a literary criticism, and which would focus upon the individual poem. He recognizes that Coleridge (and successors like I. A. Richards) had failed to achieve such a criticism. In the Coleridgean theory,

as Mr. Tate says, the "specifically poetic element" was not an objective feature of the poem but rather a "subjective effect." Thus criticism was led out of the poem and into the mind; the emphasis or tendency of the system was "psychological, with metaphysical ambiguities."

Mr. Tate proposes to get round this difficulty by defining poetry as "a mode of utterance," the most intense and complete mode that we have. Poetry is not an organization of experience, as it is for Mr. Brooks, but rather a "configuration of meaning." Mr. Tate defines it formally as "a unity of all the meanings from the furthest extremes of intension and extension." It is the most complete mode of discourse because it unites extension and intension, abstraction and concreteness, the symbol and the icon—science or pure prose, and myth or pure poetry. "Tension" is Mr. Tate's name for this synthesis of meanings.

Like Mr. Brooks, he uses his criterion to estimate the poeticity of different writers. Certain poets, who write abstractly, come too close to the "extension" end of the scale; they are at best but an inferior kind of prosy half-poet. An extreme of "intension" or particularity would be equally objectionable, though for the opposite reason. The best poets, and in fact the only true poets, are those who synthesize the two extremes, who fuse the two qualities of language. That these concepts are Platonic universals, dialectically applied, must be apparent to every reader.

By the use of these principles, Mr. Tate thinks, the critic may keep his focus where it belongs, upon the poem itself, and may judge it by standards which are truly poetic. But it is not so. In the first place, these ideas do not focus the analysis upon the poem. What these principles help us to see is not an individual work of art but a Platonic Idea, the quality called Tension, which is revealed by the poem. It is as if, in our dealings with people, we saw only Goodness, Bigness, Youthfulness, Intelligence, or various shades and combinations of such qualities; the unique and endearing individual character is levelled out and obliterated in

a common universal Idea. The individual work of art, in its uniqueness and particularity as a single thing, is necessarily lost, for it can be nothing, on these principles, except a more or less perfect embodiment of Tension. In the second place, Mr. Tate's principle is not poetic but linguistic. Like his remote predecessors, the Hellenistic rhetoricians, Mr. Tate analyzes poetry not as poetry but as a kind of discourse. He avoids ethics and psychology only to fall back upon another non-poetic science—philosophy of language. And in the third place, in order to provide a value for the poetic kind of language, he finds it necessary to describe and defend it as the linguistic embodiment of a special kind of knowledge. As Mr. Tate says in his preface to *The Language of Poetry*, it seems necessary to show "that poetry, although it is not science, is not nonsense." This is indeed necessary, on his principles. But to defend poetry as a way of knowing is to force us back again to psychology (poetry is a kind of experience) or with Sir Philip Sidney to metaphysics and epistemology (it communicates a special kind of truth about reality). In either case the long-promised *literary* criticism has once more eluded us.

Surely this result was predictable. Plato himself did not want or need a literary criticism, and his method was not designed for that purpose. He wanted to show that poetry, like other phenomena, was valuable only as it participated in the one universal good. His way of reasoning, the dialectical method, was perfectly adapted to this aim. But such a method could never produce a criticism of poetry *as* poetry—a poetics in Aristotle's sense. However applied, the dialectical method must always represent poems as an embodiment of some larger value, and must guarantee this value by an appeal to general philosophy or to some extra-literary science; under this method, poetry must always be defended by showing that it is something other than poetry. The history of dialectical criticism confirms this conclusion, and Mr. Tate illustrates it as clearly as Arnold, Shelley,

Coleridge, Sidney, or Longinus. If we are ever to have a literary criticism, its method cannot be this one.

III

Poetics, as Aristotle understood and practiced it, was an empirical science. Its object of study, the subject matter with which it was concerned, was a collection of *things*: particular works of art, considered as existing real objects of a definite sort. The aim of the science was to isolate such objects from all other and different things, to classify them into kinds and subkinds according to their intrinsic character as objects, and to analyze and formulate the principles of their internal composition. The results of his study, as presented in the *Poetics*, consisted of inductive generalizations, derived from a close and subtle analysis of particular poems. Thus "poetry" for Aristotle was not an essence or Platonic universal, as it is for dialectical critics, but simply the name of a class of things.

His analysis of poems was *formal*. A "form," in Aristotle's terminology, is one of four kinds of cause: the efficient cause, an agent or other external force operating upon a thing; the final cause, or purpose of a thing; the material cause, or raw unformed substance from which a thing is made; and the formal cause, the organizing and unifying principle which gives an individual shape and character to the substance. Since they do not inhere in the object itself, the efficient and final causes are external. These external causes, while not entirely disregarded, are subordinated in the *Poetics* to the internal causes. Horace and Longinus, by contrast, focus upon the external causes—Horace emphasizing the final cause or purpose, defined as an effect upon the audience; Longinus dealing primarily with the efficient cause, the mind or soul of the poet. Stylistic criticism, like prosody, deals with an aspect of the medium of art, in other words with its material cause. It is then intrinsic, but is partial and one-sided since it

disregards the formal cause. Aristotle, however, considers the poem in its internal character, as an autonomous thing. It is conceived as a whole made up of parts; the analysis distinguishes the parts, the material constituents out of which the work is made, and establishes the principle of their unification—the “form” or governing principle which determines the order and connection of the parts and unites them in a single coherent whole.

A work of art can be differentiated from all natural things by the fact that it is an “imitation.” Aristotle uses this much abused term in a literal and unequivocal sense. He means that a poem, like all the products of art—paintings, musical compositions, dances, and the rest—is constructed according to models provided by nature; works of art reproduce natural objects in an artificial medium. Aristotle’s conception of the imitative process is summarized as follows by Professor McKeon:

The natural object, composite of form and matter, acts according to the natural principle of its being; in imitation the artist separates some form from the matter with which it is joined in nature—not, however, the ‘substantial’ form, but some form perceptible by sensation—and joins it anew to the matter of his art, the medium which he uses.

This account of imitation indicates the basis of Aristotle’s classification of works of art into various kinds. The *matter* of any art object is the medium employed by the artist—the “means of imitation,” as Aristotle calls it. Of course this differs in the various arts. In poetry the matter is words; in sculpture it is marble or wood; in painting, pigment and canvas; in the dance, bodily movements; in music, sound. The *form* of the work also differs in the various kinds. Different arts represent different types of natural object, as their particular media permit; and the form, being derived from the thing represented, will of course vary with it. It should also be noted that a “form,” the unifying

and organizing principle of a work of art, is not a Platonic universal, an essence or quality or value reflected in the poem. The form is a particular form, derived from the object represented, which is imposed by the artist upon his medium.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle treated at length only one kind of art object—the tragic poem. He clearly distinguishes at the beginning between a tragedy and any other kind of work. It is differentiated from products of the other arts by its "means" of imitation, the medium of words; from lyric or narrative poems by its "manner" of imitation, through the speech of agents rather than in the poet's own voice; and from comedies by its particular "object" of imitation—great actions of great men rather than the more commonplace actions of average men. These criteria effectively isolate the specific kind of thing with which he is concerned, and at the same time provide tools for its analysis.

Proceeding with the body of his analysis, Aristotle finds that all tragedies are made up of six constitutive elements. Their common object of imitation, the actions of men, naturally involves Plot, Character, and Thought: the incidents, the agents, and the spoken statements arising from these. From the means of imitation, words and music, Diction and Melody are derived; and from the dramatic manner of imitation, Spectacle. Melody and Spectacle may be counted as non-essential, but Plot, Character, Thought, and Diction are the essential formative elements in any dramatic poem, being determined in it by a play's intrinsic character as a specific kind of imitation—an imitation of actions in the medium of words. Of these elements the whole is composed.

The unifying principle of a play, the formal cause which binds together the various incidents, characters, thoughts, and words, is its plot. The plot is a cause of the play in the sense that it determines the nature and order of all the other elements. It is "for the sake of the action," Aristotle says, that tragic poets have imitated character; and the thoughts, or spoken statements

appearing throughout the play, are determined by the combination of character and action. Thus the plot, the particular story to be told, is the presiding and controlling principle of the whole: the play is a unified object, complete and perfect in itself, because everything in it is adjusted to a plot which is unified.

Its action is also the individuating principle of a play. The prosody, the diction, the thoughts, the characterization are all important, but only as parts contributing to a larger whole; it is the fable which controls the whole and makes it what it is. Aristotle therefore speaks of plot as the "soul" of a tragedy: it is the essence or definition of a play, without which it would cease to exist as an integral thing, and as a thing of that kind. By the same reasoning, the playwright is a poet (a "maker") not because of his metre or style or characters, but because of his plots; for these are the formal principle of the special kind of object that he makes.

Aristotle gives a long and detailed analysis of the four major parts of a tragic poem—plot, characterization, thought, and diction. His purpose is to show how the tragic poet attains form in his work through the manipulation of these elements. Thus he shows how the various incidents and sub-actions in a good plot—one which is unified, which has a form—are ordered and connected so as to constitute a continuous whole. Character, Thought, and Diction are approached in the same way, as distinguishable elements each having form within itself and also as parts contributing to a larger whole determined by the form of the action; but these are less fully discussed since they are less important in the whole.

A convenient final illustration of Aristotle's approach to poetry is provided by his treatment of Thought. Thought is a topic which naturally occupies much space in any Platonic discussion of poetry, since the value of a poem, for most Platonists, lies either in the truth, the moral goodness, or the expressiveness of its ideas. But Aristotle devotes no more than a single paragraph,

scarcely half a dozen sentences, to the thoughts in a tragedy. He makes only one point: that the thoughts should be consistent with the characters who speak them and must be "on the same lines" as their actions; the thoughts supplement character and action by throwing on them the light of spoken statement. This is the only point which is relevant for the critic or theorist of tragedy; everything else connected with thought in the drama is referred to Aristotle's treatise on rhetoric. And there, of course, in accordance with Aristotle's habitual separation between the sciences, thought is discussed in the light not of poetic but of rhetorical principles.

This does not mean, it should be obvious, that poetry should be about "things" rather than "thoughts," as George Moore argued—that ideas as such are unpoetic. On the contrary, thoughts belong in a play, since they are appropriate both to its object and to its means of imitation. They may contribute to it richly; a play without thoughts, if conceivable at all, would certainly be a thin and barren affair. Yet they are important to the critic only as they fit harmoniously into the poem as a whole; the validity and persuasiveness of the thoughts, like the truth and insight shown in the characterization, are matters to be discussed in other sciences—in ethics, politics, rhetoric, or psychology. Poetics is "an examination of poetry in itself, not in its relation to education, morals, statesmanship, nature, or being," and in this department of inquiry the ideas of a poem are important not for their truth but for what the poet makes of them artistically, as elements in a constructed object.

IV

Like other approaches to poetry, a practical criticism based on Aristotle's *Poetics* will attempt to distinguish good poems from bad ones. Its procedure, however, will be different. The critical standards by which the Aristotelian determines his judgments are wholly unlike those of the dialectical critic. The criteria are of a

different kind, are derived in a different way, and have a different sort of status.

The Platonist operates in practical criticism by the application of an ideal norm, some value-principle which is anterior to all poetic practice. For him there can be only one Idea of Poetry, all differences between various works and styles appearing merely as deviations from the norm, and the norm itself is determined *a priori*; it derives its authority not from particular poems but from general philosophy. Such a criticism is by nature prescriptive, not to say proscriptive; deviations from the norm (however it may be defined) are always punishable by expulsion from the ranks of the True Poets. Thus Longinus condemned the *Odyssey* because it had less of the sublime than the *Iliad*; Arnold found the humorous Chaucer inferior to the grandly serious Milton; Eliot and Pound reject Milton precisely because he was serious; and Mr. Tate bans Shelley because he wrote more abstractly than Dante and Donne. The "New Critics" as a group have sent to limbo not only Shelley and Milton but Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Swinburne, altogether a good half or more of the most admired English poets—all of them, in fact, who cannot be "brought under the general principles of symbolist-metaphysical poetry," or under some other norm such as Mr. Tate's.

If he is faithful to his method, the Aristotelian critic must argue in a different way. He judges works of art not by their reflection of some normative universal but by their internal character as particular objects. He starts by assuming that the poet's aim is to create a perfect work of art. Whatever his didactic or expressive intentions (and he may have them or not have them), the poet always tries to make a well-formed poem. *As an artist*, he has only one purpose: to impose some form upon his medium. The task of the critic, therefore, is to show by formal analysis that the poem is or is not a finely constructed work of art. The essential criterion, for the work as a whole, is simply wholeness;

and in the aspects, elements, or details the only requirement is fitness, congruity, or appropriateness within the whole. If the poem is good, the criticism will be mainly an appreciation: the critic's analysis will bring out the beauty of the poem's internal structure, revealing the organic unity of a whole in which every part is functional and necessary, as it is and where it is. If the poem is not good, the analysis will reveal the flaws in its composition, the gaps, the incongruities, the lopsidedness or incompleteness—in a word, the *formlessness*—of clumsy or amateurish art.

The criteria of judgment employed by the Aristotelian critic differ from those of the Platonist not only in character but also in derivation. Poetics, as I have tried to show, is an inductive science. Under this method, standards of critical judgment, such as Aristotle's rules for the construction of a tragic plot, are drawn from particular works. They derive their authority not from *a priori* arguments but from their manifest appropriateness to the nature of those works.

It is obvious that standards of judgment derived in this way, by an empirical study of particular works of art, cannot be guaranteed to apply to poems still unwritten, or to any poem unknown to the critic. The rules and standards of an inductive criticism can never be final, but must always be open to revision as new evidence comes in and is analyzed. The better poets are always finding new ways of imposing form upon their medium, for the forms which may be embodied in art are endless, are as inexhaustible as nature itself; and the Aristotelian critic will try to recognize the poets' discoveries and to formulate them, as they appear, among his generalizations. The program of the Chicago school is not by any means a sterile formalism, an attempt to revive old slogans and rules and to judge a living poetry by outmoded critical dogma. By its nature as an inductive science, poetics must keep pace with poetry, and the true Aristotelian will try to bring Aristotle himself up to date.

It follows also that works of various kinds must be judged on various grounds. The genres are distinguished not merely by degree, as in dialectical criticism, but by kind, by absolute differences in their internal composition. Each kind has its own formal character, and by its attainment of this (within the chosen medium) each will be judged. Thus the laws of tragic unity cannot be carried over into painting or music, whose medium we see to be different, or to satire in which the object of imitation differs from that of tragedy, or to lyric in which the manner of imitation (as well as the object) is of another kind. As Mr. Elder Olson has said in his essay on Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium":

To attempt to find a plot in the lyric would be a profitless if not impossible task; to attempt on the other hand to find in the lyric some analogue of plot in the drama and in the epic would be to run counter to the broader indications of Aristotle's very method.

In lyric poems, as the most superficial examination will show, there is no plot. Their formal principle, therefore, must be something else, which will have to be discovered by inductive analysis; in his study of Yeats's poem, Mr. Olson has shown that there is at least one sort of lyric whose organizing principle is a dialectical argument. To the analysis of such a poem, Aristotle's treatment of tragedy is relevant only by illustrating the general nature of an inductive analytical method; his rules for that kind have nothing to do with this one.

It follows, finally, that every poem must be judged on its own intrinsic merits. Standards of judgment derived from the practice of one poet can be applied to that of another only if their work is intrinsically similar, so that the same principles govern both. If Shelley's lyrics were composed on a different principle from those of Donne, they must be judged on different grounds—on grounds relevant to the particular forms or kinds

of form the poet sought to realize. Shelley's style is good or bad not because it is abstract or concrete, allegorical or symbolic, but because it is appropriate or inappropriate to the whole of which it is a part. If the *Ode to the West Wind* is a muddle or a botch, a formless blur of words, then a sensitive formal analysis would reveal this fact and would therefore condemn the poem. But if it is not a botch, if it is (as most readers must always have felt) one of the most finely made of all lyric poems, then it deserves to be honored by every candid critic.

So at least the Aristotelian would have to argue, though the Platonist, with his different assumptions and different criteria, could hardly agree. Can we determine with any certainty that one is right and the other wrong? I do not think so. A Platonist might refute another Platonist, for they have assumptions in common from which it would be possible for both to argue. But the Platonist and the Aristotelian have no ground on which to meet, no common court of appeal. It is more reasonable to accept the conclusion of Professor McKeon, that the two approaches are "mutually incommensurable." They are neither contradictory nor harmonious, but simply different.

The writers at Chicago, therefore, do not condemn the dialectical method. They have analyzed the method and have drawn attention to some of its limitations, to certain results which that approach cannot be expected to attain. But to indicate these consequences of the Platonic method is not to denounce it. If dialectical criticism has intrinsic limitations, it also has virtues which are attainable by no other means. One may always agree with Plato that true knowledge is impossible under a program of separate sciences, and that a literary criticism, even if attainable, is therefore not to be desired. The revelation of transcendental values in poetry is one possible end for criticism, and the group at Chicago is not so narrow and bigoted as to deny all merit to such an approach. They do contend, however, that another kind of criticism, having a different aim, different criteria, and dif-

ferent practical results, is also possible. This other method would not be able to reveal universal values in poetry; on the other hand, it would be empirical rather than *a priori*, would be the servant of poetry rather than its tyrant, and would do justice to the unique particular beauty of the single work of art. That there is a place for such a criticism seems to me beyond dispute.

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THE BASES OF CRITICISM

By JOHN CROWE RANSOM

I

IT seemed to me such a promising occasion that I tried to make a little fanfare for it, when Mr. Crane inaugurated a program of critical studies at the University of Chicago nearly ten years ago. And now so soon comes Mr. Trowbridge a public convert to a doctrine, making his profession of faith, and at pains to show his acquaintance with scriptures which he looks upon as canonical. The speculations under study at Chicago have already hardened into dogma, and we may as well come to our opinion about a critical position which people call neo-Aristotelian.

I should feel happier if there were on file more specimens of the school's critical practice than the papers by Maclean and Olson in the *UNIVERSITY REVIEW*, cited by Trowbridge above. But their correctness is attested in a "Prefatory Note" by Crane himself. Maclean discusses a Wordsworth sonnet, and Olson takes apart Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium." If both papers are portentous, and burdened with doctrinal commentary, that is excusable in papers written for official purposes. But what they principally come to is two elaborate versions of the *explication du texte* which French schoolboys learn to recite in their poetry classes. That is to say, they "interpret" their poems or write out the prose "arguments," or make "paraphrases." It is as if because in its ordinary performance this scarcely amounted to a full-sized labor for adult critics glorying in their strength that they do it too well, or overdo it, and elicit from the poems marvels of logical finesse in which it is difficult to believe. In "Sailing to Byzantium" there are four stanzas as my readers will know—stanzas equal prosodically and identified by the poet

with remarkable specificity as I, II, III, and IV—and Olson reports the logical procedure in part as follows:

Stanza I presents a rejection of passion, stanza II an acceptance of intellection; then, turning on the realization that art is insouled, stanza III presents a rejection of the corruptible element, and stanza IV, an acceptance of the incorruptible. There is an alternation, thus, of negative and affirmative: out of passion into intellection, out of corruption into permanence, in clear balance, the proportion being I:II::III:IV; and what orders these sections is their dialectical sequence.

And presently:

A certain artificial symmetry in the argument serves to distinguish these parts even further: stanzas I and IV begin with the conclusions of their respective arguments, whereas II and III end with their proper conclusions, and I is dependent upon II for the substantiation of its premises, as IV is dependent upon III.

Even if we should have noted a special compactness and finish in this among Yeats's poems, I think we will decline to attribute to him all the "artificial symmetry" and barren formalism adduced in a critique from which the above is a sampling. In both papers the exegesis is along familiar lines but more energy is put into it than is needed, and we sense a pair of those disproportionate performances which we know as academic. For a good academician will not only labor but labor the obvious, and will not only labor the obvious but do it with flourishes, as if to show that his heart is in it.

Evidently there are non-Aristotelians who have a proper critical fury and not room to expend it: they are confined by doctrine. The forbidden area contains all those critical procedures which could be accused of implicating the critic in "philosophical" speculations. But Crane focusses the great renunciation

precisely and even fatefully by a term: what criticism is not to do is to employ "commonplaces" to classify the poetic effects. And he explains that by this old term he means categories which are not specific to poetry but are prior to poetry, and operate in fields that are not poetry at all. He never denies that they may be applied to poetry, but argues that to apply them is to make something else of poetry. The criticism which refuses to apply them, and does what it can without them, he identifies aesthetically with a pure or "literary" type of criticism, and historically with Aristotelianism.

But let me have one more word about the commonplaces before going on. First by way of practical identification, if the term is unfamiliar in this technical use. Moral considerations are an example of the commonplaces which are contrary to the Chicago rule; to interest oneself in the morality of a poem is to waive the poetry and interest oneself in morality. But I think we are unwilling to say as much as that. To me it seems mortal to the criticism of anything, as to the criticism of poetry, if we must withhold the judgments which come by applying the pertinent commonplaces. If we do not apply some commonplaces we may as well fall back upon the policy of silence, which has its dignity though it scarcely has a standing in criticism. Croce was fanatically respectful of the "uniqueness" or particularity of the poem (which was its dignity, and to which the neo-Aristotelians bear continual witness too) but silence came very near being the consequence for the lover of poetry: he had an aesthetics but it denied him a criticism. I should say that the neo-Aristotelians are not Aristotelians but that if they stood a little more strictly upon the dignity of the poem-in-itself they would be Croceans. Here is an automobile however—returning to the commonplaces—and we will suppose it unique in its way, it having been long in the family and come to be regarded with uncritical affection; yet the time arrives when its inside workings rate an expert inspection. How is one to pass a judgment upon

this most local and contingent object without applying the commonplaces of mechanics? or if necessary the commonplaces of chemistry and metallurgy, and of business, and here or there even the over-all commonplaces of mathematics? How is Mr. Olson going to determine the logical organization of "Sailing to Byzantium" without applying the commonplaces of logic? And if he applies the logical commonplaces—as he does—what is the objection to the moral ones?

II

It deserves to be said that Maclean and Olson work their critical proceedings round a problem which must rate as the Number One problem for poetic theory. Granted that the poem is not the same as its paraphrase: what then has the poem which the paraphrase has not, and how is the critic to pay his respects to it? But I have read Maclean and Olson several times and still cannot find that they answer rather than evade these questions. They build out their paraphrases, always adding more, till these are towering and rickety structures; all the time they are hacking away at the body of the poem. It seems to me they are trying to stretch the paraphrase till it will hold the poem, and trying to trim the poem till it will get into the paraphrase. In the end the distinction between poem and paraphrase may very well be obliterated, for it is impossible to tell which is which.

They profess to two passions which combine rather curiously for a psychological point of view; that is, they do not meet ordinarily in the same psyche. First, they love the poem "intrinsically," in its inviolable particularity; indeed they claim that among all the schools of criticism they are the only official respecters of the poem as it is. But then, contrariwise, they have to have a reason for loving it, and they choose to love it as a monument of the logical intelligence; that is, as a paraphrase; which spoils the nobility of their first profession. The first profession would make Croceans of them, and the second would

make moral or logical Positivists—or why not say Platonists? But they might allege that they are not Croceans for being paraphrasing Positivists, and not Positivists for being Croceans intuiting their poetic objects.

Poetry is an ambivalent discourse if it has a prose or logical element and yet a body of imagery too energetic to collapse into the prose. Even from the tortuous readings which Messrs. Maclean and Olson offer for their poems we can elicit a kind of testimony to this effect. Ostensibly they are pursuing the prose paraphrases, but they never stop qualifying them, and perhaps the reason they keep going is that this is one way though a furtive way of reciting the unassimilable detail which they do not wish to renounce. But an ambivalence in the poem does not justify ambiguity in the critic, for criticism is certainly prose.

Olson seems dialectically tougher than Maclean. He is not unaware of his dilemma. Following Crane he has severe exercises in mind for the critic, saying that the critical inquiry, "properly prosecuted, would terminate in a discovery of the parts of a work and the interrelations through which the parts are parts of a whole." But after his own exercises with the Yeats poem he observes: "Although the argument as we have stated it clearly underlies the poem, it would be erroneous to suppose that this in itself constitutes the poem, for in that case there would be no difference between our paraphrase and the poem." He goes on to say that the poem comprehends the argument; and here he is getting warm, for this leads toward the heart of the difficulty. But when he remarks upon the difficulty he speaks with difficulty, beginning: "The poem itself comprehends the argument and collocates with it many terms which, although they could scarcely be formulated into some order approximating the pattern of the poem, nevertheless qualify the argument and determine its terms"; and does not grow clearer as he goes on. It sounds as if the collocated terms which are not exactly in and of the argument continued to form the argument and to have a little re-

flected existence in it; which is as if to say that the poem was *for* the argument, was used up in arriving at the final form of the argument, and had been altogether and all the time at the service of the argument.

III

Why not reverse the matter, and construe the argument as existing for the poem? Here I am creating a diversion, and this will be a section in which I depart expressly from my texts. But it seems shameful to hold a paper strictly to fault-findings and refutations, and not very sporting to decline the risk of taking a position of one's own. I will venture the most radical suggestion I can make, and its topic will be a certain more or less dark secret of motivation. If it should have any standing at all it seems to belong to an age that is used to strange Freudian hypotheses; for it will attribute to the public an un-self-consciousness as to what its real use for poetry is, and in a degree that is humorous and a little shocking.

The poem-to-paraphrase relation is difficult for logical theory to handle, so that even professional philosophers have been at odds about it. (Their usual bias has doubtless been towards making it a logical relation; preferably one of equivalence.) But what is hard for logic may be easier for psychology, since psychology acts sometimes as a meta-logic, or way of bringing logic within a perspective for which not all the activities are logical ones. We will certainly concede that our great theoretical difficulty scarcely exists for us practically, that is, when we receive a poem spontaneously without benefit of theory.

To get the necessary bearings, I go back to Plato's famous dictum about poetry, which neo-Aristotelians accept gratefully and uncritically where Aristotle accepted reluctantly and with reservations. It was uttered while Plato labored under the excitement of dramatizing a great phantasy: the one about a State in which the philosophers were the kings, and could ride the wild

horses of Pure Reason with abandon. Looking at the poets he scornfully disposed of their vulgar way of discourse as "imitation," or the representation of mere natural objects. But the term has a context. In Plato's thought the poets celebrated the Phenomenal or Natural World, while the philosophers aimed higher and sought empire of a Noumenal or Ideal World; on behalf of his philosophers he had to banish the poets. The issue was between Plato's moral and logical Positivism, which was his Humanism, and the poets' aesthetic Naturalism, which was innocent of moral designs and logical scruples alike. That is still an issue. As humanists if we construe the term strictly, or at any rate as idealists, we want the glories of reason if not the material benefits of science. And our human egoism is prepared to call itself Piety or The Human Destiny as well as plain Pride and Utility, in order to make us declare our Platonism.

I suggest that the imitation-element of the poem, which is its free natural imagery, is the thing which gets excluded from the argument, when we seize upon that, as if it were of little consequence; that it is our lazy and comfortable habit to suppose that its only consequence is to yield up to us eventually the hidden and subtle argument; but that really it is itself the one consequence we are interested in, and the argument is not a consequence at all but only a common antecedent, or a means.

For suppose the argument of the poem is so familiar that the poet need not spend energy of his own to establish it, and carries such a standard human value that nobody would care to take public exception to it. An argument for example like this: that the overweening ambition of kings will bring them and their entourages to grief; or, that time takes the bloom off cheeks; or, that it is a handsome thing to die for one's country. The poet who commits himself to a tidy asseveration on this order will be well within the conventions of belief and qualified as a loyal member of society; and by making his profession can proceed

with his aesthetic imagery in considerable public impunity, or in good conscience on his own part if there is worry about that.

Under this supposal the poetic dignity is transferred from the commonplace prose humanism of the poem to the fresh and innocent naturalism, where it belongs. But if we "feel" it we do not necessarily "know" it. The prose humanism is what we are trained to look for and praise.

The prose humanism is indispensable to poetry for a deeper reason than I have intimated. It used to be common among laboratory aestheticians to speak of "pure aesthetic experience," meaning imagery divorced of logical significance. But it has come to be felt that probably we can never get it pure, if we are in animal health: a pragmatic occasion is required for an act of attention. We must therefore abandon the romantic notion, if we have it, that poets are so freed by their genius from commonplaces that they can plunge without ado into primeval nature, or into the surge of "life," in order merely to witness, to report, and to versify. Nothing is arrived at in that way that is fit to report and versify; nothing is even witnessed; on that schedule the poets expire, and plenty of romantic poets have historically done so. The logic of a human purposiveness is necessary for poetic as for any other discourse. But what is "necessary"? According to Aristotle, that is necessary which is the means without which the end cannot be realized.

Pure pragmatic experience, however, is common enough, at least so far as recorded discourse is concerned; it is standard. Many publicists of Positive temper reserve their approval for works which are pragmatic with logical rigor, or through and through, and amount to works of science; the works which are loose and without logical rigor they will only tolerate as muddling and unscientific works that mean well. But they will tolerate them; and the poets, whose works must fall within the latter class, may obtain their poetic license, or at least they have

managed in all time past to obtain it, provided they take care to have sound pragmatic values every time, and plainly.

It does not have to be so plainly. Some delightful variations from plainness are evidently legitimate. The poet may withhold his profession a long time, and keep the public in suspense as to whether he is going to make one, and what one; obscuring it mischievously if he likes while the public is guessing; even leaving it obscure at the finish. He must take care to make it possible for the people to say that he is groping, for he is serious; they will be all the more grateful for his testimony when they think they have it because it was hard to get. Such is the game. Perhaps it is a psychological game like poker rather than a logical game like chess; the logical argument has a face value but it is not necessarily the one which counts.

If this last analogy does not furnish much illumination I think we can put the case more effectively, and in a way to suit Mr. Trowbridge. For the ordinary ambivalent poem it seems possible to say that the imagery may be identified as its final cause, and the logical argument may be identified as its public front or formal cause. If poetry is not a game it has a strategy. With this simple strategy it has deceived some of its own apologists almost as readily as its censors. Indeed it may deceive its own practitioners, especially in an uncritical period; for a wit and true poet like Philip Sidney may maintain without conspicuous irony that his verse is but a vessel of moral and patriotic commonplaces.

IV

Aristotle has no such fear of commonplaces as the neo-Aristotelians have. The greater frequency with which he applies them I think could be rendered statistically, and the exhibit would distinguish him from them twice. In the first place, when he finds in Greek drama some remarkable effect it is not his idea merely to see if it comes within the conventions, and take it or leave it accordingly. The neo-Aristotelians seem to advocate this dis-

position as a way of being strictly "empirical" and getting round the need of philosophizing, which they abhor. When presented with a given effect they can theoretically only consult the rule of past practice, and it is obvious what embarrassing limitations that will inflict upon them. But Aristotle really proposed to judge the effect, and philosophically as I take it, since that is what the neo-Aristotelians make of philosophy: he applied his commonplaces to see what the poem intended to do and what was its best means of doing it. And in the second place he resorted to many commonplaces other than the logical ones, to which the neo-Aristotelians confine themselves.

Now as to the kinds of critical commonplaces. I can barely indicate the range of them, and to do even that I must be schematic. What commonplaces can be applied to any discourse? I should like to see what can be done by making rude use of the three general orders of commonplace which the philosopher Charles Morris has called the three "dimensions" of any discourse, including the poem.

A. *Semantical commonplaces* are those which hold the poem to some standard of "objectivity" or "realism" or "naturalism." They assume that poetry means to tell the truth about the actual world as the empirical sciences do. Thus its argument is by all means brought to account; it is the scientific department of the poem. We test its truthfulness quickly and half-consciously against our "experience," or our "sense of fact," without anything like a formal or laboratory verification. But a critical occasion arrives when we cannot make up our minds, as for example when we suspect that the evidence has been rigged; we propose to make a little study about this, and it is a critical study, employing semantical commonplaces.

But more interesting would be the semantical study of the other part of the poem: the imitations. The empirical sciences are called naturalistic because they are presumed to furnish abstracts of actual nature, but the imitations are naturalistic in what Aristotle

would regard as a more substantial sense. They are expected to "represent" the many-propriety heterogeneous substances which are the natural objects themselves. The test of whether they are imitations is probably in whether they give us the sense of "recognition"; or so Aristotle seems to say in his quick account of *mimesis*. They do not satisfy us when we say the poetic images are "made up" or "unnatural." Coleridge's talk about Fancy and Imagination might apply here; and Aristotle's discussion of the eligibility of heroic legend and myth as the source of dramatic imitations.

Perhaps the most important of the semantical fronts embraces those occasions when a critic feels that the pull of the argument upon the imitations has been too strong, and "generalized" and "idealized" them till the life or substance has gone out of them. To generalize the substantial object is to suppress its many-sidedness and fix too firmly upon the property of the object which the argument needs. For the sake of its argument the poem doubtless must always accept a certain sequence for its imitations, and introduce each fresh imitation having one face clearly in sight which suits the requirement at that moment; but showing other faces too, and arresting ones. Aristotle had a decided preference for the idealized imitations and a lively sense that nevertheless the imitations had to be respected. We may suppose that he accepted Plato's finding of "imitation" against the poets because he must, and that he did not agree with Plato about banishing them because he was a shrewder pedagogue, and reasoned as follows: the poet may furnish his imitations of nature and still be useful to society provided he will *distort* them a little; idealizing them so that they are *obliged* to sustain the argument, and impressing upon persons with less of logical insight than he the fact that the plenitude of nature *is* compatible with reason and order under favorable circumstances. For that was Aristotle's philosophical temper. Plato himself had made this argument on behalf of music, which introduces harmonic structures into the world

of noise. At any rate Aristotle cautiously imposed an idealistic rôle upon Greek drama. As critics we are interested chiefly in his cautions. I think a good many of his notices in this sense could be compiled; as for example that the dramatic characters had to act naturally, speak naturally, even use the kind of meter that would sound most natural, and on the whole "be natural" so that the spectators could recognize them as persons like themselves.

B. *Syntactical commonplaces* are what I have called the logical commonplaces, and we have already seen a good deal of them. They are employed in paraphrasing, to see if a cogent sequence of argument is discoverable in the poem, explicit as it may be or implicit, or partly one and partly the other.

But let us turn it round: syntactical commonplaces are the ones which show where the actual terms of the poem are not logical, that is, do not suit the argument as they are. There are two cases. Probably poetic language is elliptical, that is to say, short of relational or pointer terms, and that is a deficiency for syntactics. But certainly the language is devoted to a bold and dense imagery (the imitations) which has to be stripped down for syntactics, and that is an excess. It is only by determining the syntax of the argument that we can throw into relief the dystax of the poem, though this dystax is as proper to the poem as the syntax is proper to the argument, being the character of a discourse which is poetical. Critics often make use of this consideration, as when for example they reject the poetry of E. A. Guest, if they do: they say in effect, its dystax is insignificant.

If critics would make it their procedure to determine the syntactical requirements of the poem only in order to go on from there and figure its actual dystax, they would be making the argument subsidiary to the poem, and they would take leave with their glance lingering not upon the paraphrase of a poem but upon a poem.

The neo-Aristotelians make much of Aristotle for his requiring a strict causal sequence in the plot. But he was aware of

features that were not very syntactical. Among the six primary features of poetic drama he dwelt most upon Plot, Character, and Thought, in that order; they managed among themselves to carry the burden of the syntactical scheme of drama. Diction, Song, and Spectacle were in a lower position. The Choric Song and Spectacle of Greek tragedy were mere excrescences or "embellishments," and we concede that. But Aristotle's treatment of Diction gives fair notice to elements for which he makes no syntactical claims. For example the language is metered; but if Aristotle makes a half-hearted Positive justification of meter he does not base it on any syntactical contribution, and meter by its nature is not calculated to be an asset to syntax but a liability. Then the language instead of realizing the excellent possibilities of its grammar and dictionary is addicted to figures of speech. And what do they accomplish? A metaphor makes bold to substitute for the species syntactically needed a genus, or for the species another species, or for the genus a species, or for either a foreign term obtained by analogy. Where is the logical right in any one of these procedures? What would be its standing in a completely syntactical discourse like science? Its contribution is not to syntax but to dystax.

I met one of Professor Crane's pupils at Chicago who was applying Aristotle's four categories of metaphor to the language of the poet Gongora. He reported that he was working for an exacting taskmaster, which was admirable. I do not know whether his study was entirely statistical or whether it was also speculative and critical. It is my belief that the figures of speech are dystactical devices; some of them (such as those which Longinus likes to examine) serving to obscure the pointer-relations of prose language, and others (metaphors for example) serving to densify the imagery and increase the "naturalism." But probably nothing would throw more light upon the syntactical vagaries of poetry than a survey of its figures.

C. Last, the *pragmatical commonplaces* are those employed

in discussing the final causes, or human uses, of the poem. In my opinion we have here the most backward branch of theory, and of practical criticism. I have indicated my feeling that our motives for wanting poetry may be obscure even to ourselves; we may think it is a Positive discourse having ordinary Positive objectives, yet in welcoming the strange foreign content that crowds in we are finding our real satisfaction in a *sub rosa* sort of activity. What imaginable use have we for imitations except in respect of those logical counters, their usable faces, and how can we put dystax to service except by a labor that removes it and leaves the syntax clean? But if we have the courage to take that position we may as well confess that we want the poetry insofar as it is prose. And though that is not far from the position which some critics have taken it seems to have no effect upon poetic practice, which goes on with its naturalistic representations and dystactical devices, and will probably intensify them if it is challenged.

It is an age of motive-hunting and pragmatic speculation. I shall not spin out a discussion of our problem, except to say that the moderns seem to me to have faced it in earnest at last. Freudians, Pragmatist philosophers, and anthropologists have undertaken it, but with their presuppositions they do not seem likely to find causes for poetry which are proportionate to its force and universality. Natural scientists and their apologists do not pay to nature the same sort of attention that poets do. Psychologists who find merely nominal uses for poetry, for example those who take it to be an "expression of emotion," and those who solemnly declare it is a source of "pleasure," are certainly not to the point; though Aristotle was in the former class in his way of justifying the horror of tragedy, and in the latter class in his broad remarks about *mimesis*. The reason these psychologists do not explain the matter is that their commonplaces are not real and objective, but improvised, and the employment of them is very near tautology.

Why should we like to tarry with poetry upon the confused

and unregenerate aspect of nature? But we do it, and if the fact is not formidable enough we will fortify it with the fact that we do it in many other arts too.

V

Trowbridge registers disparagement of the contributions made to poetic understanding by the "new" critics; who may be identified briefly as the best of the professional critics, writing for the bright general reader, and distancing themselves so decidedly from the all-round or academic performance. Nor do I suppose he is other than correct here again in representing his school. What we have here is a subtle version of the old town and gown controversy, and it does no harm.

But I think it must be suggested that disparagement works both ways. To be specific, in Maclean's paper for example there is much that would seem to a professional critic too obvious for words; and I mean it would seem too obvious, if I am not mistaken, for a critic like Richard Blackmur to want to spend his words upon it; and at the same time Maclean refuses to speculate at all at some points which might seem to Blackmur the very points justifying another critique of Wordsworth at this day. The professional critic is always *avant garde*, occupying himself with poetic effects that are strange, and eventful for the development of poetic practice. Consequently he occupies himself preferably with recent and contemporary poetry. But it is a credit to the vitality of criticism in this generation that it has devoted so much of its attention to poetry that is old, with an air of making plenty of discoveries there too.

I do not know who have been the greatest critics in our language. But I know that Sidney, Ben Jonson, Dryden, Samuel Johnson, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Arnold, with partial exception of the last, were none of them men with a scholastic or academic stiffening in their blood; and that among our recent critics, such as Eliot, Richards, Burke, Empson, Tate, Winters,

Wilson, Brooks, Warren, Blackmur, who furnish an Elizabethan foison of wit and spirit, or even a galaxy, those who have had academic titles have worn them a little cynically, and been on guard against the occupational hazard of their employment.

Nevertheless I can imagine unfolding somewhere, in a generation later than this one, and after incredible agonies, a great Syllabus or Compendium, in which would be shown many proper critical procedures in their right places, distinguished and justified. Its scope would be heroic, and its usefulness would make it indispensable. I am filled with admiration thinking of the dialectical nicety of its authors, and the cyclopaedic grasp, as well as the toughness of academic constitution.

It will always be a good thing for the extra-curricular critic to be informed, and to have sat his time in the academy; especially if he comes in a better period than now, when the academy has opened its doors to receive the fresh air, and a Grand Codification such as I suppose is proceeding patiently on a scale commensurate with the real critical achievement.

BOOK REVIEWS

OF VITALITY, REGIONALISM, AND SATIRE IN RECENT AMERICAN POETRY¹

By HORACE GREGORY

I

On the North American Continent we possess, so it has been often said, a vital language, and if we promise not to grow self-satisfied and overtly aggressive in our use of it, we may take its merits for granted and build upon them. It is to give vitality of speech a life beyond the use of lecture halls and immediate occasions that should be our concern. The gay and bright rhetoric of the advertising agency, which twenty years ago seemed so refreshing, has grown shrill and thin; the speech of the political manifesto (which had been imported from Paris, so some have said, soon after the first World War) has grown heavy and pontifical; and as if to counteract the first two extremes of rhetorical exercise, a neo-scholastic rhetoric, based, as someone said, upon a Henry James Version of the Bible, came into being—and all three contained the elements of what some of us too fondly call "American vitality," and then confess that it is likely to suffer the pains of "growing up" and that it has small chances of being something that will endure.

The true merit of such vitality (if we read new books of poems within their proper season, which too often is not more than six months beyond their arrival off the press) is that it is seldom dull. Even the driest book written by one of our compatriots contains something that has a compulsive vacuum within its pages, a negative force that holds the unwilling reader to his chair. This mysterious force was once

¹Because of their misuse in recent years I have held a personal distrust and dislike of footnotes. I agree with Chesterfield who was a man of learning in his own right and who said: "Wear your learning, like your watch, in a private pocket: and do not merely pull it out and strike it; merely to show that you have one. If you are asked what o'clock it is, tell it; but do not proclaim it hourly and unasked, like the watchman."

In a paper of this kind which (in another form and with some changes) will appear as the final chapter of a book, *Four Decades of American Poetry*, a few asides to the reader are necessary.

described to me by a young painter who had hired a male model and then feared to discharge him: "The man sits there until I have to leave the studio; I have to make up excuses to leave the room. His mind is a vacuum and I am drawn into it; I can't think and I can't paint, and he sits there staring at me (he is one of the best models I've ever had) for hours."

O first created and creating source,
Beloved rib of elemental force;
Being, in whose deep thighs
Nascence remotely lies. . . .

I quote from a group anthology of some years ago² whose contributors wrote remarkably alike; some wrote lines on completing a master's thesis, others celebrated the doctors' degrees that were earned by their friends, and classroom platitudes were liberally bestowed upon the recipients of industriously earned rewards:

For you have learned, not what to say,
But how the saying must be said.

The professed love of learning was a commendable aspiration (as such intentions often are), and the sound of a boyish voice and vitality still echo from the now forgotten lines. The first lines I have quoted were obviously intended to be "classical," and they were addressed to the sea, but unfortunately they resembled nothing so much as Coventry Patmore's celebrations of his "espousals," in which truly enough, the imagery was properly domestic, "a rib of elemental force," and they created a vacuum toward which all platitudes of phrasing and of human conduct were irresistibly drawn. And from a member of the same group one reads the following lines that had been written "To An Infant Daughter":

Alas, that I should be
So old, and you so small!

There is, of course, no denying the implied difference in size on such

²*Twelve Poets of the Pacific*, edited by Yvor Winters (New Directions, 1937, \$2.50). *The Giant Weapon*, by Yvor Winters (New Directions, 1943, \$1.00). I confess that I am bewildered by Mr. Winters' title for his selected poems. What does the giant weapon mean? What are its associations, what are its ambiguities? Since I am a middlewesterner, my only recollection of hearing the giant weapon mentioned was in a joke from the lips of a comedian on the stage of a middlewestern-stock-company burlesque show—but that was over twenty years ago.

an occasion unless the father were a dwarf, but if the size of the father more closely resembled that of the child, the misfortune, I believe, would have been far greater. And if disparity in ages were the only consideration here, and not size, would the situation have been improved if the father were, let us say, ten or twelve years old? The author of these lines probably desired to say nothing more startling than the wish that he belonged to his infant daughter's generation; but the phrasing was awkward and incorrect—and the desire itself probably sprang from the irrational but human wish to live and to give advice forever.

Now I doubt if such examples of vitality and of naïve neo-scholastic fervor could be found elsewhere than on the North American Continent; certainly they could not be found in the British Isles, or in De Valera's Eire. I have chosen my examples from Yvor Winters' verse and that of his friends and students whom he met at Stanford University in California where he taught English. The phenomenon is American, and it represents in American poetry, as well as the teaching of it, a confusion between the desire to employ traditional forms in verse and the desire to impose a rigidly and naïvely formed convention upon them. It was forgotten that poetry is made with words and not ideas, and that a profound difference has always existed and still exists between writing freely and well within a tradition—whatever that tradition may be—and imposing, almost by rule of thumb, a convention which audibly counted syllables in each line of verse and refused to respect the traditional employment of poetic intelligence and wit. John Churton Collins in his essay on the principles of criticism reminded his readers that

Dr. Johnson divided critics into three classes—those who know the rules and judge by them, those who know no rules but judge entirely by natural taste, those who know the rules but are above them.

To have rules and to abide by them is, of course, better than having no standard for poetry at all, and that is why Mr. Winters' prose has more of that mysterious force that my friend, the young painter, described than can be found in any volume of his verse. In his verse the force perceptibly weakens, and the signs of strain are all too much in evidence, so much so that one is certain that he has remained in the first class, an awkward one, that Dr. Johnson defined. In speaking of John Donne's poetry Coleridge remarked that Donne

seemed to twist iron pokers into true love knots; and in reading Mr. Winters' verses one feels that he has tried, by a great exercise of will, to transform lovers' knots into iron pokers.

At Stanford University Mr. Winters became the leader of a small but devoted neo-scholastic cult, and one might almost say that it was "Californian" in its evangelical fervor and its extravagances. It produced "little" magazines and critical articles in literary quarterlies during the late nineteen-twenties and through the following decade. Mr. Winters praised the work of his students highly, and one young woman, a Miss Rowena Lockett, whose verses were by no means talented, still stirs my imagination through the captivating sound and appearance of her name. The name itself could have been invented and fitted to a number of gay rhymes by William Mackworth Praed, that master of British light verse in the days of the Regency, who wrote "The Ball-Room Belle," and who was said to have influenced the Russian poet, Pushkin. Indeed the labors of Mr. Winters and his friends, that attempted to keep alive the more superficial aspects of the Humanist "controversy" which engaged the attention of literary journalists in the year of 1930, has already acquired a semi-historical curiosity value. As their writings appeared in the literary quarterlies of the day, one was reminded of the Bishop of Bristol's comment, or rather it was said that he made it, of the meeting between Anna Seward, "The Swan of Lichfield," with Mr. Hayley, "The Bard of Eartham." Mr. Winters and his friends were by no means as well-mannered in addressing one another as were Miss Seward and Mr. Hayley—but it can be said that the same sentiments prevailed:

"Prince of poets, England's glory,
Mr. Hayley, that is you!"
"Ma'am, you carry all before you,
Lichfield's own, indeed you do!"
"In epic, elegy, or sonnet,
Mr. Hayley, you're divine!"
"Madam, take my word upon it,
You yourself are all the *Nine*!"

II

Another poet whose name was less known for its individual distinction than for its prominence within a group was Robert Penn Warren. And among reviewers for the literary quarterlies his work has been

highly and consistently praised. In such instances it is always difficult to disentangle the individual merits of the poetry itself within a scene that Morton Dauwen Zabel so aptly described in his *Literary Opinion in America* (1938):

To pick up any history or anthology of contemporary verse is to be depressed by the high rate of mortality among poetic reputations. No aid is lacking—from group politics and cut-throat rivalries to high-pressure salesmanship and journalistic inflation—in speeding the declines already promised by the ephemeral nature of the average literary beliefs and styles.

Mr. Warren's early verse appeared in the *Fugitives* anthology (1928), and since that time he has been an able editor of *THE SOUTHERN REVIEW* and an advisor of John Crowe Ransom's *KENYON REVIEW* where he has written critical articles with something of the same ease of manner and decisiveness which marked John Gibson Lockhart's critical pieces in *BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE* that flourished so authoritatively in early nineteenth century England. Mr. Warren's verse did not achieve the distinction of John Crowe Ransom's poetry;^{*} and it had far less grace than Ransom's memorable and persuasive rhetoric. But it should be said in fairness to Mr. Warren's volume of *Selected Poems: 1923-1943* (Harcourt, Brace, 1944, \$2.50) that its author was a younger man than Mr. Ransom was at the date of its publication in 1944. Mr. Warren has yet to write a poem that is as self-contained and withstands the test of rereading on several levels of appreciation as Mr. Ransom's "Antique Harvesters." The majority of Mr. Warren's poems suffer rather from seeming to exist within the shadow of group activities, which during the decade of the nineteen-thirties in America and in Great Britain was an "enemy of promise" among younger writers of both left and right persuasion. It is not without difficulty that one discovers the signs of individual character in Mr. Warren's meditative and descriptive pieces, in his "Bearded Oaks," in his "Picnic Remembered," and in the pasticcio of his exercise of verse, "The Garden."

^{*}Mr. Delmore Schwartz asked a pertinent question and answered it well in *THE SOUTHERN REVIEW* (Summer 1941): "Is it not true that literary judgment in the end is literary comparison? One work is better than another work. If one did not think of better works, one might be satisfied with what is not good at all." Which is the beginning of critical wisdom. Mr. Schwartz's third book in verse, *Genesis* (New Directions, 1943, \$3.00), was an unfortunate experiment in writing a long, and supposedly semi-autobiographical poem. Since that date his verse has recovered the poise of his earlier promise in a short poem published in *THE KENYON REVIEW* (Summer 1944).

Mr. Warren's metrics still seem forced and studiously achieved. His "Variation: Ode to Fear" was too obviously written in the manner and language of Louis MacNiece's lighter verses to be taken as other than a free-hand exercise. Mr. Warren's "The Ballad of Billie Potts," a Kentucky story, showed such violent lapses in taste that I became confused as to whether or not it was Jesse Stuart or Mr. Warren himself who dictated the lines. This experiment in verse need not, of course, be taken too seriously, but a sober generalization can be drawn from it, and it is this: the writing of "dialect verse" is always a questionable exercise, and it makes little difference whether its author's name is James Whitcomb Riley or an anonymous "John Smith," and that question raises its head, just as though it were Jeeter himself on the stage of *Tobacco Road*, in the following lines from the unfortunate "Billie Potts":

"So I done come home," Little Billie said,
"To see my folks if'n they ain't dead."
"Ain't dead," Joe answered, and shook his head,
"But that's the best a man kin say,
Fer hit looked lak when you went away
You taken West yore Pappy's luck. . . ."

One wonders what the effect would have been if Yeats had written his *Words for Music Perhaps* in a barnstorming Irish "brogue." In any case, it would have reflected on his taste and his responsibility as a regional poet. The true promise that Mr. Warren's verse still offers the reader is contained in three stanzas from his "Bearded Oaks"; the verse is less "forceful" in a fortuitous sense than it is in any section of Mr. Warren's long and ambitious poem, "Billie Potts," but its lines are firm and clear:

So, waiting, we in the grass now lie
Beneath the languorous tread of light:
The grasses, kelp-like, satisfy
The nameless motions of the air.

Upon the floor of light, and time,
Unmurmuring, of polyp made,
We rest; we are, as light withdraws,
Twin atolls on a shelf of shade.

Ages to our construction went,
Dim architecture, hour by hour:
And violence, forgot now, lent
The present stillness all its power.

It is in this half-meditative, half-descriptive vein that Mr. Warren's verse deserves the attention of the reader. In these lines the verse is closer to the neo-scholastic and domestic strains of Yvor Winters' verse than it is to Mr. Tate's and Mr. Ransom's far more thorough assimilation of a classical, and if I may say so, regional tradition, but it is definitely the vein in which Mr. Warren's verse promises its own rewards.

The potentialities of regional poetry are always with us, and there has always been the paradox of the poem that is most "universal" when it is most "at home"—which is, of course, an ancient truism to readers of poetry. In American poetry, the classical example is Whittier's *Snowbound*; and in our time, both W. B. Yeats and Robert Frost impressively matured within a regional tradition. It should also be remembered that both elder poets outgrew such limitations that may have been imposed by their particular "groups"—for Yeats outgrew The Rhymers' Club and the circle of the Abbey Theatre as positively as Mr. Frost outgrew the limitations of his early associates among the British Georgian poets. All this is, of course, a matter which must always be referred to the individual and non-translatable qualities, the wit and the imagination, and the very speech of the poems written by individual poets.

III

Through the same period that was represented by Mr. Warren's "Ode to Fear" (and I have already remarked upon the British sources of its manner and speech) younger American poets, superficially at least—and among the weaker of them the influence became subcutaneous—keenly felt the presence of W. H. Auden, C. Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNeice across the waters of the Atlantic. European influence has always been a salutary one in American poetry, and we need go no further than the examples of Edgar Poe and Longfellow to prove it—and W. B. Yeats's "Irish regionalism" was strengthened rather than weakened by what he drew from the French Symbolists—provided that the poet has the internal resources, imagination and gifts to assimilate it. Perhaps the most immediate influence that was widely and quickly spread by the younger British poets was a renewed respect for traditional forms in English verse—that is, if one did not trouble to remember that they had been employed by every American poet of distinction from E. A. Robinson to E. E. Cummings. But the point is, that with the exception of Stephen

Spender, the British poets seemed to move with great freedom and facility within the traditional forms of lyric verse; and the immediate results were spectacular.

In practice the verse of Louis MacNeice was the most readily adaptable; he seemed to write his verse in the way that he defined, "as one enjoys swimming or swearing." In other words, his gift was easily assumed, thoughtless perhaps, often journalistic, extraverted surely—and at its worst, flat, dull and wordy. In its lighter moments the verse was insensitive and brisk, and at its best it emulated (in a fine adaptation of one of Horace's odes) the clarity and strength of the Roman tradition in English verse, but in itself and in its influence upon younger American writers, it very nearly founded a school of poetic insensibility. Its metrics were tone-deaf, and only the most obvious half-and-full rhymes and cadences were heard within it. And as one makes the effort to reread Mr. MacNeice's *Poems 1925-1940* (Random House, 1941, \$2.50) today, there is indeed something that resembles more "swimming" and "swearing" in it than poetry.

Stephen Spender's second volume, *Poems* (Random House, 1933, \$1.75), moved in an opposite direction from that of Louis MacNeice's verse; and since Rupert Brooke's arrival in 1916, no single book of poems by a young and unknown British poet received so much praise. Its promise still holds the attention of the reader, nor does it diminish when one discovers that the majority of the poems betray a sometimes naïve and always sensitive reading of Rainer Maria Rilke's poetry. It is enough to know that the sources of Mr. Spender's verses were unhackneyed and freshly inspired. *Ruins and Visions* (Random House, 1942, \$2.00) was considerably less reassuring. Something of the original sensibility remained, but one felt that it had been blunted and battered by an unfortunate series of encounters with history and politics. One must look for felicitous single lines in the book, and not for completed poems—and its language drifted into those generalizations of history, politics and psychology, which, if immaturely phrased, rapidly become clichés. The truism that poetry is written with words and not ideas left its negative impression upon a volume whose title seemed to describe its contents with an imaginative and fatal accuracy.

Of the four British poets I have mentioned, and though it now seems gratuitous to say so, W. H. Auden alone, through his poetry, has sustained and fulfilled his early promise. I cannot pretend in a paper of this kind to say all that should be said of Mr. Auden's

accomplishment within the past ten years; I must confine myself to those values in his poetry that are of importance within the present "American scene," and my hope is to clarify its relationship to contemporary American poetry. The first thing to say is that Mr. Auden's verse is not American, nor is it entirely British, and I hope this statement will not frighten those who place a high premium on the virtues of nationalism in poetry, for nationality like other classifications of sex, color and race, should not concern us unless they force themselves upon our consciousness as we sit down to read or to hear a poem. It is sensible to admit that whatever "Americanisms" appeared on the surfaces of Mr. Auden's early poems were those that showed a reading of T. S. Eliot and the acquisition of American phrases and turns of speech that had become fashionable at Oxford and in London during the first half of the nineteen-thirties. On my visit to London in 1934, and on an afternoon when I was graciously being served coffee instead of tea at the house of a young editor who happened to be a Yorkshireman, I became aware of something that was exaggeratedly familiar in his speech and manner. The mystery was explained when he confessed to me that he had recently seen a showing of James Cagney in a new film. And here I witnessed and heard still another aspect of American "vitality," as it made its appearance less than a hundred yards from Hampstead Heath.

All this, of course, refers to what seems to be a superficial aspect of W. H. Auden's poetry, but it is there, and I shall try to point out its relevance to the rest of his work as briefly and as clearly as I can. Mr. Auden's early verse revealed, among other things, a literary personality, a young British poet, who moved with great and brilliant ease in a fashionable, intellectual and social milieu of his day. And the figure that Mr. Auden created spoke the language of that milieu, its politics, its particular brand of "Oxford Communism," its "Americanisms," its private jokes, its literary quarrels with an admirable show of poetic grace and wit. It soon became obvious that those around him were lesser figures in the milieu that he himself helped to create and in which he made his own contribution. He seemed to draw from that active scene a speech and a manner whose resources were inexhaustible. The gifts that the literary personality possessed relieved him of those responsibilities that fell to the lot of the island Englishman; and as readers of *Letters from Iceland* can testify, he personally assumed the role of a latter-day Lord Byron, who was the rare phenomenon

of a British poet who carried at heart the events and ideas of middle-Europe.

Since Mr. Auden's arrival in America and during his stay on the North American Continent, his literary personality has been deprived of that rich source of immediate reference in language and events which had existed in an Oxford-London-Orient-Express milieu; his "Americanisms" were less brilliant and less effective because they lacked the appropriate setting of a European context; and he has been put to the difficulty (and not without natural failures) of inventing another language in which to convey the expression of poetic wit and personal authority. For this reason the speech of *The Double Man* (Random House, 1941, \$2.75) already seems as "dated" as that eldest document of vital literature which is always yesterday morning's edition of *The New York Times*. And in five years from now it is highly probable that the "ideas" and the "private jokes" which so genuinely delighted the readers of Mr. Auden's early books will be as desperately out of fashion as D. H. Lawrence's manifestos on sex and obscenity are today.

I think I am not far wrong if I say that W. H. Auden's poetry bears the same relationship to American poetry today as D. H. Lawrence's prose to the "American scene" of twenty years ago. The presence of D. H. Lawrence in this country could not be other than salutary; and both Mr. Auden and D. H. Lawrence created a literary character which happened to have the same name as the author of their books. As we become aware of this relationship, the likeness becomes all the more convincing when we discern that both characters treated "ideas" and interest in intellectual affairs with the passion and intensity of one who becomes the leader or the devotee of a cult.

What then seems to have the quality of endurance in Mr. Auden's poetry? And what true example does it offer us behind the ephemeral speech and gestures of the "personality" which seemed to utter its convictions or the lack of them with such facility? What is the nature of the art or spirit which has endowed his poetry with a measurable size and weight and depth? One answer is that his poetry exists—and with appropriate freedom and wit—within the tradition of English lyric verse. From that tradition it derives its authority; and even in its deliberate parodies and satires it pays its respects to a range of lyrical conceit in poetry that extends from Sir Philip Sidney to Alfred Lord Tennyson. This describes the nature of its "size"; and if some

of the spaces within it are imperfectly filled, it is because the creation of a "literary personality" and its legend always tends to dissipate such energies that should have been concentrated upon and within certain individual poems. Of the depth and weight of Mr. Auden's gift an analogy may be found among his literary ancestors, in the verse of the gifted, and today all-too-little-known, Richard Lovelace—and this is not an analogy of kind, but one of true weight in which something very like a balance could be struck between the lyrical grace and brilliance of Mr. Auden's poetry at its best and the songs, odes, pastorals, elegies and reflective verses of Lovelace. The strain in Mr. Auden's verses that has always held a relationship to what has been called "metaphysical" poetry may be rediscovered in reading the poetry of Lovelace. How Audenesque these few lines from one of Lovelace's songs now appear!

Hark! O hark! you guilty trees,
In whose gloomy galleries
Was the cruel'st murder done
That e'er yet eclips'd the sun.

* * *

Feel no season of the year
But what shaves off all your hair;
Nor carve any from your wombs
Aught but coffins and their tombs.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add that such lines are very nearly certain to stir and to delight the reader's imagination; and it is also superfluous to remark that as long as Mr. Auden's poetry is at its best it achieves the same result; the fact is all too obvious. If I were Mr. William Empson I would insist that the pleasure derived from the reading of Lovelace's lines came from their author's perception of poetic (and thoroughly legitimate) ambiguity. Such an accomplishment in poetry (wherever it may be found) is always a source of delight; and such distinctions, as to whether or not the verse is major or minor, or "romantic" or "classical" are matters of secondary importance. I, for one, shall always relate the title of Mr. Auden's

The Double Man to Lovelace's lines in his second poem to "The Snail":

Yet the authentic do believe,
Who keep their judgment up their sleeve,
That he is his own double man,
And, sick, still carries his sedan:
Or that like dames i' th' land of Luyck,
He wears his everlasting huke.
But, banish'd, I admire his fate,
Since neither ostracism of state,
Nor a perpetual exile
Can force this virtue change his soil:
For wheresover he doth go,
He wanders with his country too.

It is in the concealed fashion of Loyelace's snail that the true virtues of Mr. Auden's poetry are to be found; and Lovelace's remarks upon the snail are those that one welcomes in the presence of Mr. Auden's literary legend and his poetry.

IV

I seem to have traveled at some distance (as indeed I have) from restricted considerations of American vitality and regionalism in poetry, and as I began to speak of the "younger" British poets of ten years ago, considerations of temporal nature entered my paper. If Mr. Auden is fortunate in his future career, his verse will be pronounced "dead" many times, and particularly at those moments when he has achieved the more profound stages in the development of his language. As long as the future of his poetry remains unpredictable, we may be fairly certain (for it is poetry of the kind that seems to shift and veer its course without relinquishing the quality of its conceits) that all news of its "death" is premature. It has been that particular kind of good fortune that has attended the poetry of T. S. Eliot for the past twenty-two years; and there will be few to dispute that the publication of his *Four Quartets* (Harcourt, Brace, 1943, \$2.00) has rather more than firmly established its reputation.

Since 1940 it is also clear that the elder generation of poets in both Britain and America, a group which is defined by the names of Edith Sitwell, E. E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, Mr. Eliot himself, and H. D., has continued to do

some of its best work.* It is a generation that has fortunately survived the events, the distractions, the superficial changes in poetic styles which had taken place in two world wars. Whatever "moral" may be derived from this phenomenon, it is one that asserts the merits of individual distinction, and not of group influences, or of any number of those lesser considerations which have so often entered the reviews of poetry during the period between two major wars. That "moral" is, I think, persuasively firm and clear; and however closely we may analyse the work of these various writers (much of which has been reduced too often to the level of a class-room exercise—which some one called a "word-counting compulsion")⁵ the same larger conclusion is obtained. The conclusion may be an obvious one at

**Street Songs*, by Edith Sitwell (Macmillan, London, 1942, \$1.75); *Fifty Poems* (Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940, \$1.50) and *I x I* (Henry Holt, 1944, \$2.50) by E. E. Cummings. Mr. Cummings' poetry is what people used to call "inimitable": it is as a matter of fact highly conventional lyricism of the first order in verbal sensibility and wit. *Fifty Poems* contains a beautiful elegy, "my father moved through dooms of love," and *I x I* contains an equally fine love song with the last line of its first and last stanza (there are seven stanzas in the poem) reading "and viva sweet love." *The Wedge*, by William Carlos Williams (Cummington Press, 1944, \$3.50) which is one of Dr. Williams's best single volumes of verse. It contains the austere and memorable "Burning the Christmas Greens." *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, by Wallace Stevens (Cummington Press, 1943, \$3.00). In this volume Mr. Stevens' employment of the *terza rima* is equalled only by Dr. Williams in his poem "The Yachts"; Mr. Stevens is still the James McNeill Whistler of American poetry and the master of a tradition in English verse that stems from a sensitive and brilliant reading of the French Symbolists. *What Are Years*, by Marianne Moore (Macmillan, 1941, \$1.45) contains the delicately perceived notations of her "light rhymes"—Mr. T. S. Eliot's phrase—particularly in her title poem. *The Walls Do Not Fall*, by H. D. (Oxford University Press, 1944, \$2.00). Of all these volumes by no means the least memorable is Edith Sitwell's *Street Songs* whose arrival was as unexpected and as salutary as the publication of W. B. Yeats's *The Tower* in 1928.

⁵Alexander Pope had a comment on word-counting that like so much of Pope's satire deserves to be remembered:

. . . is Aristarchus yet unknown?
Thy mighty scholiast, whose unwearied pains
Made Horace dull, and humbled Milton's strains.
Turn what they will to verse, their toil is vain,
Critics like me shall make it prose again.

* * *

'Tis true on words is still our whole debate,
Disputes of *me* or *te*, of *aut* or *at*,
To sound or sink in *cano*, O or A,
Or give up Cicero to C or K.

* * *

The critic's eye, that microscope of wit,
Sees hairs and pores, examines bit by bit.
How parts relate to parts, or they to whole,
The Body's harmony, the beaming Soul,
Are things which Kuster, Burman, Wasse shall see;
When man's whole frame is obvious to a flea.

which to arrive, but it argues for the existence of a few critical truisms which have been too often thrust aside and forgotten. The most important of these has a moral aspect, which can be briefly stated in the old-fashioned and Victorian phrase, "self-respect." Self-respect as I use it implies a healthy relationship between the poet and what he writes; W. B. Yeats (who was certainly no moralist of the old school) implied it when he began the period of his aesthetic maturity by naming the title of his book, *Responsibilities*, and closed it with the statement there was "more enterprise in walking naked." So much, then, for self-respect in aesthetic matters, and it can be shown clearly enough that each of the poets that I have named (including the otherwise boyish and yet happily adolescent E. E. Cummings) has retained it. As self-respect acquires depth and meaning it also assumes religious and moral responsibilities and in these terms the recent poems of Edith Sitwell and T. S. Eliot, as well as some of the new poems written by H. D. should be considered. And it should be said that this measure of self-respect (since it should not be misunderstood) is aware of that relationship that has always existed between man and God, and does not fear such charges that may be levelled against a true and deeply realized humility.

Since H. D.'s new book of poems, *The Walls Do Not Fall*, has yet to receive notice in this country, a quotation from it would not be inappropriate, and the book itself, which might well be called a book of devotions, illustrates to some degree the truism that I have just advanced. Its theme finds its expression in the following lines:

recover the secret of Isis,
which is: there was One

in the beginning, Creator,
Fosterer, Begetter, the Same-forever

in the papyrus swamp,
in the Judean meadow.

And a characteristic poem in the book is:

Ra, Osiris, *Amen* appeared
in a spacious, bare meeting-house;

he is the world-father,
father of past aeons,

present and future equally;
beardless, not at all like Jehovah,

he was upright, slender,
impressive as the Memnon monolith,

yet he was not out of place
but perfectly at home

in that eighteenth century
simplicity and grace;

then I woke with a start
of wonder and asked myself,

but whose are those eyes?
for the eyes (in the cold,

I marvel to remember)
were all one texture,

as if without pupil
or all pupil, dark

yet very clear with amber
shining. . . .

I do not intend to imply that this poem embraces an orthodox faith, for that claim would certainly distort an intelligent reading of the poem, but the poem has grace in more than one meaning of the word, and the quality of its poise and beauty is far more than that which can be discerned upon its surface. The book is unmistakable proof of the poet's maturity and it contains those rare qualities which so fortunately transcend the more facile definitions of time and place.

It could be said that all of those whom I have mentioned in this section of my paper have written poems that contain reference to the war, but the war has by no means engulfed the poetry nor do we feel that it has been fortuitously introduced as "subject matter" that will depreciate the value of the poetry five minutes after a future armistice is signed.

Since 1940 those who might have been promising writers today have gone off to war; this is a loss that cannot be measured by us today, nor can we judge with absolute finality the temper of a generation that will receive the rewards of critical praise ten years from

now. But it can be said that a few younger poets have been published, and that among them Robert Fitzgerald and Dunstan Thompson, and Henry Treece, show divergent signs of promise.

Robert Fitzgerald's book, *A Wreath for the Sea*, (Arrow Editions, 1943, \$2.50) could be contrasted and compared with Mr. Warren's *Selected Poems*. The outlines of Mr. Fitzgerald's book are slightly blurred. I feel that the author has put too many poems in it that were merely classroom compositions and adaptations from the French and Latin; therefore, the first impression derived from reading it is that it is less mature than Mr. Warren's volume. But on rereading the book for itself it has less spectacular and more enduring merits than Mr. Warren's *Selected Poems*: it has fewer lapses in taste; it shows the presence of a finer sensibility, a far more accurate ear, and a rare and beautiful appreciation of those classical values that existed and continue to exist in British and American poetry. Such lines as

How, by what structure, by what music,
In what weaving way could I make visible
The incongruity and glory?

express a proper question for a poet to ask, and it is phrased with greater accuracy and more ease of movement than anything Mr. Warren has written. The poetic sensibility and intelligence of the following lines also deserve our admiration:

The epithalamion, the hush were due,
For I had fasted and gone blind to see
What night might be beyond our passages;
Those stars so chevalier in fearful heaven
Could not but lay their steel aside and come
With a grave glitter into my low room.

The portrait-elegy for and of John Wheelwright is an excellent poem; and it is, by the way, a true elegy that has been written well within the tradition of English verse, and it is not merely as many contemporary elegies have been, a strained and fortuitous use of the elegiac title to jot down anything that may have floated through the poet's mind. Among Mr. Fitzgerald's "Mementoes" there is a brilliant tribute to Henry James's heroines:

Milly and Daisy and Henrietta
And Isabel, beauties, pray for us
In your fresh heaven, on those lawns

By Thames under the copper beeches,
 Behind the iron gates in ducal
 Shadow: ambassadors! At Venice
 Where the old and weary and splendid
 Spiders of the world devoured you,
 Who were not ever in anything
 Quite so correct as they. Sisters,
 Mothers later corrupted, maidens
 Living like men into bewilderment
 With a stiff upper lip: you masks
 At operas and marriages,
 Matriarchs with knobby canes,
 Goodbye, goodbye gentlewomen.

At first look the associations of the lines I have just quoted may seem too "literary," and so they are until one remembers that James's heroines belong to an American past that is our common heritage, and that their lives exist within a mirror whose rays reflect a light that illuminates a twentieth century sensibility.

Of Henry Treece's *Invitation and Warning* (Faber and Faber, 1942, 6s.) it is sufficient to say that this volume, if placed at the side of Dylan Thomas's *New Poems* (New Directions, 1943, \$1.00) constitutes whatever promise may be found in a regional literature that has for its centre the wealth of mythological reference and the Celtic music and imagination which owe their life to the heritage of Wales. From that group we have yet to await the emergence of mature poetry in English.

Dunstan Thompson's first book, *Poems* (Simon and Schuster, 1943, \$2.00), seems to present a youthful Laocoön, caught and unsuccessfully struggling in the coils of George Barker's verse, and it stands, therefore, in immediate danger of becoming a museum or "period" piece in contemporary poetry. Mr. Thompson's diction is often faulty, but there are moments when it has greater purity and charm than Mr. Barker's verse; and Mr. Thompson's verses announce the presence of a sensitive ear for music that should not be underrated:

Let the hero pass,
Facilis descensus, the avenue of tombs,
 His pride death daunts, his pomp the dust dooms;
 All columns fallen, the arch gone down. But we
 Are not heroes so long as the heart is strong
 To praise God's grace in the one beautiful face,
 Whose gaze, gold against the sun, an exaltation
 Of indifference is. So let us like angels trace
 High heaven with stars to make a morning song.

Mr. Thompson's verse needs a touch of austerity that it is not likely to gain if it follows too hastily in the wake of Mr. Barker's elegies.

George Barker's *Sacred and Secular Elegies* (New Directions, 1943, \$1.00), promise to be a triumph of the disintegration of personality in poetry. Rather than announcing a neo-romanticism in contemporary verse, they revive memories of "The Spasmodic School," who under the leadership of the forgotten Alexander Smith, momentarily shocked and excited their more sensitive readers with lurid fancies and weird speculations. Mr. Barker's verse has not been written firmly or brilliantly enough to encourage a serious discussion of it, and I am not prepared to say how "sacred" or how "secular" its original intentions may have been. I would say that it is extremely easy to write the verse that Mr. Barker writes, and perhaps there is a certain amount of fun, if little satisfaction, in doing so. Its values are arbitrary and rootless; the trouble is that they convey less wit and spirited invention to the reader than they seem to promise, and they probably annoy the heavy-minded critic who hopes to find coherent meaning in them, and then feels cheated. If viewed as light verse, some of Mr. Barker's "Elegies" are momentarily amusing.

V

As one speculates about the future of various styles and mannerisms in contemporary verse, there is always the possibility of a new school of satire. Weldon Kees' volume, *The Last Man* (Colt Press, 1943, \$1.50), shows the beginnings of a direction toward satire; the book has its "influences," which are largely those of Allen Tate's early verse. But the verse remains unmarred by that facility, which if encouraged and "commercialized" becomes an "enemy of promise" among younger American poets. The "gloom" of Mr. Kees' verse which probably stands in the way of its receiving greater notice seems unfaked. The best poem in the book is the last:

THE SMILES OF THE BATHERS

The smiles of the bathers fade as they leave the water,
And the lover feels sadness fall as it ends, as he leaves his love.
The scholar, closing his book as the midnight clocks strike, is hol-
low and old;
The pilot's relief on landing is no release.

These perfect and private things, walling us in, have imperfect
and private endings—
Water and wind and flight, remembered words and the act of love
Are but interruptions. And the world, like a beast, impatient
and quick,
Waits only for those that are dead. No death for you. You are
involved.

This is not, of course, satire; but a sense of irony runs through the lines.

In this country, and during the past fifteen years or so, there have been efforts to encourage political and social satire in verse, and the results have not been particularly happy. In magazine verse, Mr. Ogden Nash's contributions to satire have been entirely too artless and topical, and his best remarks do not improve beyond their first recital. E. E. Cummings' art is that of burlesque, and while one enjoys its occasional impudence and implied respect for Bostonian conventions, it is not mature, and in reading it one always has that "shock of recognition" which some people enjoy in watching a smartly dressed child throwing bricks through plate-glass windows. We admire the wit in Cummings' verse and its poetic ambiguity rather than the diminutive source of its satire. In an introduction to a new edition of Charles Churchill's *Poems* (1933) Mr. James Laver set the question before us neatly:

... as the nineteenth century advanced the satirical elements in English poetry grew smaller and smaller. It has not yet recovered its place therein, for the satirist needs both irreverence and strong moral conviction, and the Victorian age had the second without the first, while the modern period has the first without the second.

At our backs we need a moral order to justify and to identify the position of the satirist; and we also need the imagination and the wit to discover an appropriate target. Swift had his position which included the deanship of St. Patrick's in Dublin; and though Pope wasted much of his wit upon his inferiors, he had behind him the order of a Christian society, an order, by the way, in which political lines were often crossed. I know of no younger and contemporary American satirist who has been willing to assume the responsibilities of a moral order from which his satire may take effect. In America the tradition of satirical verse has not been noted for its distinction. The only

figure in the past that comes to my mind is that of James Russell Lowell, whose wit in verse resembled that of Thackeray's in prose and was not the product of a first-rate intelligence or a profound imagination. Yet I believe his political satires, which were written in a curiously "literary" dialect that he invented, were the most effective verses of their kind; and he had behind him the strong moral conviction that the Mexican War was both a comic and a disastrous mistake.

Perhaps the early readers of Mr. Karl Shapiro's verse hoped to discover a young poet who would assume the position of a satirist in a new generation. I happen to think of Mr. Shapiro's verse, in *Person Place and Thing* (1942) and *V-Letter* (1944) (Reynal and Hitchcock, \$2.00 each), in terms of sarcasm rather than a satire. It is the kind of thing which in Mr. Shapiro's own words is generated by "snuffle and sniff and handkerchief" and "O hideous little bat, the size of snot" and "the baboon's crimson bottom cut for a lip"—and it reminds me (in its phrasing) of a forgotten piece of verse written fourteen years ago which confessed "I've got an old, black screamy mood." Anyone is, of course, free to make a similar confession and then enlarge upon it, but the result is scarcely one that can be called satire, nor do I think that such invectives generate poetic wit. At best the sarcasm has for its end in view the spectacle of animal and of human ugliness, but we have yet to find the world of moral order that Mr. Shapiro's verses carry at their source. That source is hidden and if it is to be found anywhere, it is to be glimpsed at, if not clearly seen, in his tribute to the "Christmas Tree," a memory of childhood's images, in his second book, *V-Letter*. But of course the memory of childhood cannot be mistaken, nor should it be, for a sense of moral order, or a mature or even a precocious outlook on a world in which good and evil have been known to exist—and still exist today:

Summer is sweet because it brings outside
The warmth of houses and the heated air;
We lie on grass as on a delightful rug.
Christmas brings winter like a bride
Indoors with white to wear.
The tree looks normal in the house; it grows
Into the floor; the children hug
This visitor with his dark and pretty clothes.

This is a charming fancy in the school of Louis MacNeice's *Poems*. Mr. Shapiro's verse has verve and skill, and we are assured by the

editor's notes in his two volumes that he has not been responsible for its publication in book form; he has been, so it is said, "somewhere" on "active duty" in the southwest Pacific, and we must wait until the present war is over to know the full extent of his abilities. But his abilities will not rest content, I suspect, in writing verses; for his gift, despite its sarcastic commentaries upon the discomforts of the world, resembles the gift possessed by the fortunate Mr. William Saroyan. It is histrionic and its expression is both a little bit tough and a little bit soft; the "Christmas Tree" poem shows its potential development in the direction of Mr. Saroyan's *The Human Comedy*, and the Hollywood screen and the Broadway stage should offer the largest and earliest rewards for Mr. Shapiro's talents. At present Mr. Shapiro's skill in writing has one cardinal merit; his verses are seldom dull; they are easy to read, and not unlike Mr. MacNeice's lines they create an atmosphere that can be cheerfully described as "swimming" or "swearing."

It would seem that I do not have much hope for the sudden arrival of a "new school" of satire in American verse—and indeed, I do not. But this does not mean that twentieth century British and American poetry has been written without irony and wit. Within the past twenty years one of the pleasures of reading verse in English has been the rediscovery of ironic commentary in poetry; and among poets of recognized distinction the presence of wit has not been absent from their commentary on the environment in which they live. A new morality cannot be acquired within the short span of a generation; and in America a traditional morality such as T. S. Eliot represents has yet to find a new language aside from the contributions of his *Ash Wednesday*, his *Murder in the Cathedral* and his *Four Quartets*. Evangelical conversions may be heartening to witness, and they may contain subjective values that would be inhuman to ignore, but unless a continuity is established, unless some kind of enduring moral order is recreated and recognized, we are not likely to find another Plautus or Jonathan Swift awaiting his cue for arrival from the darkness of the wings.

VI

Throughout the course of this paper I have spoken briefly (and I hope not too briefly) of certain general principles and circumstances that have been related to contemporary poetry. For the sake of clarity, as my own opinion concerning them, I think it would be well

to repeat a few of them here. I believe it is not unimportant to discuss American vitality in poetic speech and to conclude that its value must be measured in aesthetic and moral terms. I would say further that regionalism in poetry has its value only if it is not confused with the less important activities of a group, for group classifications, however helpful they may be to instructors of literature and literary historians, tend to become misleading in respect to individual poems. What American poetry needs most (and this is implied throughout the progress of my paper) is the courage (since there are many diversions and easily won rewards not to do so) to mature. But I also believe that it is very nearly an impertinence for any critic to insist too strenuously that individual poets suddenly "grow up." Their so-called "growth" is a private matter, and the critic who urges it unknowingly merely reiterates D. H. Lawrence's instruction to Mr. John Middleton Murry "to go be a man." The instruction may well have been an appropriate one for Lawrence at the time he uttered it, but it was too all-embracing in its command for any human being to change his character, as it were, between an evening's conversation and sitting down to the breakfast table on the following morning. American vitality, with its admitted strength and charms, cannot be substituted, year after year, for the more enduring values of individual maturity and distinction, and as we view the human process of "growing up," questions of morality, religious being and aesthetic responsibility continue to play an increasingly larger part in the evaluation of any period in American poetry.

IN POOR SHAPE

By W. H. AUDEN.

THE CONDITION OF MAN. By Lewis Mumford. Harcourt, Brace and Company. 467 pages. 1944. \$5.00.

For the past ten years Mr. Mumford has been working on a Comedy of Culture. His first two acts, *Technics and Civilization* and

The Culture of Cities, were concerned with the products of culture, and were most informative and illuminating; it is all the sadder, therefore, to have to report that his final act, in which he turns to study the producer, is unequivocally bad. I do not like reviewing bad books; in most cases silence seems both the kinder and the wiser course; but the faults of *The Condition of Man* are so much the typical weaknesses in the thinking, not of our enemies, but of ourselves, that it is a duty to examine them.

To begin with, Mr. Mumford seems unaware that the study of Man himself is not only much more difficult than the study of his cultural creations, but requires a totally different approach. Erudition and aesthetic judgment which will take one far in the case of buildings and machines, i.e., objects open to common inspection, are very little help when it comes to the beliefs and feelings of the human subject, where every man is his own and only scholar. If one is writing a history of painting, the first thing to do is to see as many pictures as possible: if one is writing a history of theology, i.e., of the absolute pre-suppositions which men make about the meaning of their existence and their actions, and this is what Mr. Mumford's latest book is about, the first thing to do is to discover and state one's own; to be a disinterested epistemological *I* is quite impossible. This the author has not done, with the result that he and his readers are completely at the mercy of his own subjectivity. For instance, speaking of the Council of Nicea, he says:

A succession of Councils, beginning with that of Nicea in 325, disposed of a series of heretical doctrines. By their acceptance of these decisions the Christians learned to sacrifice individual preferences to group needs, and to establish a line of continuity in thought and policy, which guaranteed their political survival. In a disintegrating world, heresy becomes a political crime; and schism becomes the greatest of sins because it disperses the energy needed for renewal.

Now whether this statement is true or false, it is certainly not what the Christians of the fourth century thought they were doing. They were trying, in their poor innocence, to arrive at the truth, not a convention like the Rule of the Road. Mr. Mumford would never describe in this way a meeting of physicists to argue the merits of the Relativity Theory, nor a decision of German anthropologists that the Jews are sub-human, because in the case of physics and anthropology he be-

believes that there is more than a conventional difference between truth and error, and one which cannot be settled by a majority vote. His unstated assumption in the case of Nicea, is that the Fathers were wrong in believing that there is a God of whom propositions must be either true or false. But not to say so, to present as purely objective what is necessarily a subjective interpretation of historical facts, is dishonest, the more so because on other pages God is spoken of as if Mr. Mumford believes he exists.

Again, of the Benedictine Monk he says, "he died *to* the world, not *for* the world." Leaving aside his own testimony that the monastery was a social form the temporal success of which became its greatest danger, his unacknowledged disbelief in the social value of prayer makes him distort, despite all his reading, the whole theory on which the contemplative life is based.

What, then, are the assumptions of our guide as he romps us through the past and urges us to depart with him on new missions into the future? Are they adequate? Do they hang together? Unfortunately not. It would be hard to find a more classical case than this book—as which it is well worth reading—of the bewildered liberal who, accustomed for two hundred years to being the brilliant *enfant terrible*, suddenly finds himself dismissed as an old fogey. (Is there, for instance, any word which sounds more comically conservative today than the word "progressive"?)

Liberalism began as a protest against the vices of the Old Order, political tyranny which claimed eternal validity for temporal structures, religious fanaticism which attempted to impose by physical force beliefs which, however vital to salvation, can only be acquired by subjective acts of faith, human ignorance which held many things as beliefs which were really propositions verifiable by experiment, and human fear which evaded responsibility for its desires by denying them consciousness. Against these enemies, liberalism had the proper offensive weapons, sceptical rationalism, pragmatism, naturalism, pedagogy—all forms of *reflection*. But now—and no one knows this better than Mr. Mumford—it is on the defensive and against quite another enemy. The new tyrant is a technician, the new fanatic a pedagogue, the new ignoramus a relativist, the new coward a naturalist, the new ultramontane an agnostic. What is poor little Bo-Peep, whose liberal Super-Ego, as Mr. Mumford would call it, is shocked by

carnivorous habits, to do when her very own sheep start behaving like wolves?

The emergence of the New Order within a liberalized culture, is itself a proof of how brilliantly liberalism has succeeded in its historic mission of unmasking.* From Montaigne to Freud it has shown up the pretender to faith, justice, chastity, but in the assumption that men were required to be pious, just, and chaste, the unmasker and the hypocrite were all the time at one. Neither foresaw that round the corner lay another and much more dangerous problem, that of Requiredness itself.

I am reading this book in the lunch room of a hotel. At the next table is a peculiarly objectionable little girl whose whines disturb my reading. I want to wring her neck. But this is Long Island and, if I do, I shall very quickly be taken away by a policeman and electrocuted. The objective world requires that I restrain myself, so I plug my fingers in my ears and try to go on reading. She howls all the louder. Phantasy transfers us both to Poland and, without changing me in any other way, clothes me in a German uniform. What does Mr. Mumford offer me now as a substitute for the police? My Super-Ego; in other words, Mother, Oxford, my library, etc. But, as he quite rightly tells me, I am a person, i.e., I can be an object to myself and decide against any part of my personality, for whatever its social origin, it is mine now to do what I like with. Mother wouldn't like it? Mother's dead. Old Oxonians don't do that sort of thing? What fun, then, to be the first Old Oxonian who does. The great geniuses are unanimously against it? I'm sorry, I haven't their metabolism.

Mr. Mumford has given the show away: "a remodeling of the self and the Super-Ego is an inescapable preliminary to the great changes that must be made." Exactly. If the Super-Ego is something that can be changed this way or that at will—I agree with him that it can and so do the Nazis—then, if I don't like the prohibitions of the one I've got, I can get another one which will be less stuffy. The Super-Ego, in fact, can only be effective as long as I don't know I have one; the moment I know, its commands lose the unconditional note which is the only I shall listen to if my self-love is seriously at stake.

Mr. Mumford cannot simultaneously believe in the existence of the person and in "original sin" as an atavistic inheritance from primitive animals. A person is a elf who, because he can and must ask who he is and why, demands unconditional answers. In consequence, of

course, he is always mistaking conditional answers for the real thing, the voice of the Super-Ego for the voice of God, which is why every man needs to be a liberal, but not a liberal only, for it is as important to believe as it is to doubt. Mr. Mumford knows this but sets about believing in the same way that he sets about doubting. He observes, he consults learned authorities, he collects and compares, he asks for "a dynamic syncretism of doctrines and creeds and philosophies"—but this method can no more give anyone a faith than it can make him fall in love. You can no more pick a treasury of the world's best doctrines and so make a faith you will believe in, than you can take a beautiful leg from one girl and a beautiful arm from another, and get a wife you will live with till you die. Hamlet cannot escape the trap of reflection by more reflecting.

It is perhaps an uneasy suspicion that his approach is wrong which is responsible for Mr. Mumford's high-powered style, with its evangelical inversions: "Old indeed is the belief that the good man must disencumber himself of material possessions"; its Colonel Blimp invective: "In the lion's den of Wagner's youthful disciple, Nietzsche, with his cult of the superman, the stinking hyenas of Nazism already lurked"; and its emancipated diction of 1910: "Wheaten bread and sugar, increased quantities of fats . . . finally the potato—renewed the lust of life at its sources. The eye dilated: the belly grew big; the genitals swelled." As for his concluding pi-jaw, all pep and pince-nez: "Do our public life plans make for the fulfillment and renewal of the human person, so that they will bear fruit in a life abundant?", I fear that, when it comes to uplift, the camp-fire girls, even this one, are going to prefer Mr. Gerald K. Smith.

THREE CRITICS

By ARTHUR MIZENER

THE LITERARY FALLACY. By Bernard DeVoto. Little, Brown and Company. 175 pages. 1944. \$2.50.

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES. By Horace Gregory. Harcourt, Brace and Company. 211 pages. 1944. \$2.50.

THE ANATOMY OF NONSENSE. By Yvor Winters. New Directions. 255 pages. 1943. \$3.00.

Mr. DeVoto's book has been the subject of a great deal of attention

since its publication, though it is not easy to see why it should have been. Its subject is so superficially treated that the book never really touches the basic issues involved and its manner combines an ineffective imitation of Mencken's robust, hyperbolic humor with a sustained implausibility of argument. Mr. DeVoto starts from the perfectly reasonable proposition that literature properly "deals honestly with the basic experiences in which all men may see themselves," a proposition which raises the whole enormously complex problem of the relation between the life represented in literature and the formal manipulation of that represented life necessary to its evaluation. But it raises no problem at all in Mr. DeVoto's book. He is perfectly sure that basic experiences, for an American writer, consist largely in the socio-economic history of the United States as Mr. DeVoto understands it. The literature of the nineteen-twenties was trying, according to him, to write such history and the "literary fallacy" consisted in its presuming to do so with a knowledge of literature alone.

There is not, I think, much to be gained by trying to follow in detail what passes with Mr. DeVoto for a proof of this thesis. Something over half his book consists in an examination of Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, on the assumption, so far as I can make out, that Mr. Van Wyck Brooks and the literature of the nineteen-twenties are practically identical. The rest consists in an indignant affirmation of what no one ever denied—that the material progress of America during the twenties was remarkable—and a horrified disapproval of the failure of American writers at the time either to praise this progress or to acquaint themselves with the life of John Wesley Powell. This is about equivalent to substituting Matthew Arnold for Victorian literature on the easy assumption that "in any period it is the critics who work out general ideas; artists tend rather to apply them in detail than as a system." It is like arguing that Elizabethan drama was not dealing with basic experiences because it practically disregarded the growth of capitalism in its time.

There were grave limitations to the particular version of the romantic attitude which dominated the literature of the twenties, but Mr. DeVoto's occasional glances at literature proper are hardly calculated to uncover them. He begins his book with a disclaimer of any intention of writing a "history of American literature in the nineteen-twenties," but such a disclaimer does not release him from the necessity of understanding this literature in a book which undertakes to show that it was

cut off from "the realities" and therefore futile and self-destructive. Such, however, is the bluntness of mind with which Mr. DeVoto approaches literature, on the rare occasions when he gets around to it, that understanding is hardly possible. Here, for example, is his considered opinion of Mr. Eliot:

No one else who has written English in our time has spoken with such a high consciousness of a writer's authority—or with such contempt of extra-literary experience. No one else who has written criticism in English at any time has so straitly narrowed it to an assessment of literary experience conceived solely as abstract idea. . . . The intent was always to devote [criticism] to a single aspect of literary idea, the epistemological aspect.

And this is his account of what Hemingway's books tell us:

Life, so far as it can be desired or respected, does not exist above the diaphragm. It is activated by digestion, the surge of adrenalin into the bloodstream at crises of danger or defiance, and the secretion of the testicles. His hero is a pre-Piltdown stage of man. . . .

What Mr. DeVoto can mean by saying that Mr. Sinclair Lewis "may well be the best novelist of the decade" is, after this difficult to imagine.

Judgments of this order do not suggest a very sensitive mind, nor does the style with its labored, pseudo-scientific wit, its pretence of philosophical exactitude, and its literary affectations ("high consciousness," "straitly narrowed," "surge of adrenalin"). This kind of thing is everywhere in the book. It appears in the elaborate third-person coyness with which Mr. DeVoto refers to himself: "Even so, a vagrant mind wonders . . .," or, "One who has worked long with Parkman wonders. . . ." It appears in the plodding irony: "What shapes might the literature of the 1920's have taken. . . . If F. Scott Fitzgerald, instead of breaking a leg in a dolorous October, had been able to play on the freshman football team at Princeton. . . . If the generic novelist of the period had first experienced sin in a hayloft instead of the books of Havelock Ellis . . . ?" And it appears, you hope, in the blundering triviality of such remarks as "All Mr. Eliot's other perceptions support it, down to the time when his forehead was crossed with ashes on the first day of a later Lent."

These same qualities display themselves in the kind of reasoning Mr. DeVoto uses; he is perfectly capable, for example, of arguments like the following: the nineteen-twenties portrayed America as deca-

dent and vulgar; Spengler and Haushofer described America as a decadent pluto-democracy; "I am not obliged to determine whether a decade of our literature thus invited our enemies to aggressions which they might not otherwise have dared or hoaxed them to their doom." Or: literature in the nineteen-twenties began by substituting books for experience; it went on to substitute parts of books for experience; "from such fragmentation it was a short step to semantics." "It began by undertaking to reconstruct society. It ends by sternly requiring an opponent to be sure he is using technical terms correctly. This, bear in mind, is what systematic criticism is now saying about itself." This last statement is typical. Its first sentence is an extravagant oversimplification; its second, in so far as it is true, a credit to criticism; and its third quite false except as it refers to Mr. Brooks and Mr. MacLeish, the first a highly unsystematic writer even for a critic and the second not a critic at all.

From this kind of thing it is a positive relief to turn to the kind of thing Mr. Gregory is trying to write. This is the urbane essay of appreciation, the gentleman-scholar kind of thing the limits of which are perhaps set by Garrod at one extreme and Max Beerbohm at the other. This is a kind of criticism which has, of course, distinct limitations, but it has the considerable virtue of respecting its subject and it is capable of a kind of precision and delicacy. Mr. Gregory appears to be most interested in the nineteenth-century, and especially the Gothic, imagination, but he is perfectly capable of an appreciation of Yeats or Paul Elmer More. His concern is to isolate and give us the relish of such things as the moral delicacy of Dr. Johnson, the quality of simple truth in Landor, or the personal sources of the romanticism of Beddoes and Poe. Perhaps the best essay in the book is the one in which Mr. Gregory's school memories, Wordsworth's immortality ode, and *Alice in Wonderland* are played off against one another with that kind of wit which is a little too good for actual conversation but never so good as to seem impossible for it.

Mr. Gregory's one weakness, and it seems to me a nearly fatal weakness for this kind of essay, is a pervasive uncertainty of syntax and diction. This may take the form of an imperfect idiom, for example, "her solitary man will not dance with her no more than . . .," or, "could speak aloud without the merest sign of effort." Sometimes it is careless grammar, as in "fits of kindness, or anger, or of dismay," "yet how clever and with sound judgment he . . .," and "the Sultan's

sacrifice of, his murder in fact, of Irene." It may even, occasionally, sink to an unattached modifier or an inaccurate tense as in "the not unfamiliar difficulty that has come into being by freely tossing the names of half a dozen . . ." and "an imagery that lent distinction to his style since the writing of *The Tower*. . . ." This uncertainty is also evident in the diction, sometimes in the form of over-elegant phrasing, as in "On Prose Written by Poets and, in Particular, on Byron's Letters"; sometimes in the form of labored imagery: "The unseen blight [of poverty] was on every blade of grass and in the swelling heart of every grain of corn." Sufficiently expanded such a figure is capable of considerable confusion: "This world, of course, was the very map of Europe which had been so recently traversed by dreams of Napoleonic conquest, and was now entered, scrawled with the percentage marks of loss and profit on its margins, within the balance sheets of the House of Rothschild." Occasionally one or another of these devices, or a combination of them, produces a sentence of almost epic ambiguity: "In speaking for himself and for the position of the poet in a world where commercial enterprise received an over-whelming share of its own approval and material goods which was the very world of Philadelphia and New York, the slight, yet piercing moral overtone is felt."

There is a great deal of this kind of uncertainty in Mr. Gregory's book; hardly an essay, in fact, escapes it; and where the precise discrimination of fine talk is the essence of the case nothing could be more unfortunate. It seems a pity, for Mr. Gregory has something to say which can, at best, be only partly said in this careless way.

I have discussed elsewhere¹ Yvor Winters's *Anatomy of Nonsense*; so I shall confine my remarks here to the opening chapter, which most of Mr. Winters's critics have slighted. This chapter is a brief summary of his critical theory and is very important. The central point Mr. Winters states as follows: "The emotional content of words is generated by our experience with the conceptual content, so that a relationship is necessary. . . . If there is a necessary relationship between concept and feeling, and concept is unsatisfactory, then feeling must be damaged by way of the relationship." This leads him to the argument that the rational or paraphrasable content of the poem is primary and that the poet's task is the fundamentally moral one of discovering and expressing the feelings appropriate to a rational content.

¹In *Accent* (Spring, 1944).

Mr. Winters supports this contention by discussion of "the basic unit, the word," which purports to show that in any given word the concept it refers to "motivates" the feelings it evokes. Mr. Winters sometimes seems to imply that by *feelings* he means only those suggestions of approval or disapproval, of admiration or scorn, which float about most words ("vague associations of feeling"). I suppose no one would deny that poems which are constructed only of such feelings are pretty likely to be bad, though even these sometimes have a certain limited kind of virtue, as—Mr. Winters to the contrary notwithstanding—Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" has. But if one takes denotation in the usual sense, the denotation of a word in non-technical language tends only to set rather wide limits within which its connotation operates. It is in this sense only that one may say the common denotation of *perfume* and *stink* "motivates" the attitudes they arouse.

But even though a word's denotation did "motivate" its connotation, it would not follow that the logically paraphrasable content of a poem must motivate the feelings it evokes. This is a doctrine based, not on the nature of language, but on a conviction of how it ought to be used, for there is nothing in the nature of language which makes the kind of poetry in which feelings are adjusted to a rational content better than the kind in which logic, analogy, or association is used to explicate and judge an attitude. Mr. Winters's is an admirable doctrine, and one in terms of which much good poetry has been written. But it does not represent, as he insists, the only way in which good poetry can be written.

Mr. Winters's use of this doctrine in his criticism is, furthermore, confused by his personal moral predilections. Most literary criticism is; but I suppose critics on the whole try to do justice to the poetry before them on its own terms before they make their necessarily more or less personal estimate of its author's general ideas. The relations between a poet's formal procedure and his general ideas and between the reader's general ideas and his ability really to read a poem create enormous problems. But these problems are certainly not going to be solved by arguing from the fact that moral judgments are possible to the position that one's own moral judgments are sufficiently reliable to allow one to say with confidence that a large number of other people are not making sense. It is one thing, that is, to say that serious poems ought to be morally responsible; it is another to say they are talking nonsense, both literally and emotively speaking, when they

fail to adopt toward hedonism, or "enthusiastic pantheistical mysticism," or some other position, Mr. Winters's attitude of stern disapproval.

Once this tendency to present moral disagreements in the guise of formal criticism is allowed for, Mr. Winters's theory of pseudo-reference appears to be the exaggeration into principle of a preference for the poetry of statement. Mr. Winters simply dislikes the kind of poetry in which an attitude rather than the logic of an explicit or implicit statement is what holds together the arguments, objects, or actions, and he comments on such poetry with a fine and even-handed disregard for the poet's intention; he writes about it as if there were no way to regard it except to assume that it is trying to do what Mr. Winters thinks poetry ought to do, even though he knows this is not the case. Thus, for example, the Hakagawa passage of "Gerontion" is described as an example of "obscurity," of "discreetly modulated diffuseness," because the persons or situations in it imply anterior personalities or actions which are unexplained. But this would be true only if Mr. Eliot were using the narrative method, which he is not. The fact that Mr. Eliot is using a device similar to that which the drama and fiction so often use, the device of the type character or action which is recognizable without explanation, in order to represent in concrete instances a general attitude, is simply ignored. Mr. Winters remarks that "a more direct and economical convention seems to me preferable," without noticing that for Mr. Eliot's purpose this is the direct and economical convention and that it is only for the purpose of writing a different kind of poetry that some other convention would be preferable.

I do not remember that Mr. Winters has ever written on the Elizabethan dramatists whose multiple plots are held together neither by logic of statement nor even, sometimes, by logic of action but by an attitude. But a comparable procedure to the one Mr. Winters applies to Eliot, and to the Romantic and the Metaphysical poets ("The logical method is frequently debauched by the English Metaphysical School . . . the logical structure becomes a shell of empty logic but exploiting certain elusive types of feeling."), would be to write about these dramatists as if they had all along been trying to write plays like Racine's.

Doubtless the perfect poem would so use language as to make a complete statement about its subject as well as to establish a complete attitude toward it. But poetry has plainly yet to find a way of doing

either of these things without sacrificing something of the other. Mr. Winters only exaggerates the virtues of his kind of poetry by writing as if it sacrificed nothing in the way of richness of ideas and feelings by its tendency to conventionalize these things, just as he exaggerates the shortcomings of the other kind of poetry by writing as if it gained nothing by its sacrifice of logically paraphrasable content and its tendency to conventionalize character and action.

We are, in this controversy, up against the literary version of the old need to choose between freedom and order, liberty and authority, anarchy and tyranny. The poetry of the twentieth century is in form and therefore in fundamental conviction, as Mr. Winters says, on the side of freedom. It is enormously valuable to have some one like Mr. Winters to point out to us how narrowly exclusive this preference is. But the dilemma remains, as little solved by Mr. Winters's impaling himself on one horn as by twentieth-century poetry's impaling itself on the other. It is quite possible that this is a necessary exaggeration, a means of avoiding the contamination of the ideas he finds everywhere around him; but it is also a version of the very attitude he opposes, an extravagance of conservatism, a rebellious, *à l'outrance* defense of decorum.

JUDGE LYNCH AND THE PAX BRITANNICA

BY ROBERT DANIEL

STRANGE FRUIT. By Lillian Smith. Reynal and Hitchcock. 371 pages. 1944. \$2.75.

Reading *Strange Fruit* and *A Passage to India* together makes an instructive comparison. Each depicts the relations between a dominant and a subject race of another color; each focuses the racial conflict through the persecution of an innocent man of the subject race; each in its opening pages sways the reader to the side of the subject race and keeps his sympathy there throughout.

There are also differences. If *A Passage to India*, which appeared

in 1924, owed its original popularity to the twenties' interest in the political question that it poses, something far deeper has kept it in print for two decades; or rather, it is the extraordinary breadth with which Forster treats the theme of man's inhumanity to man that gives the novel life. The breadth of his understanding is seen in his characterization of both the Indians and the English.

Though he backs the Indians, he does not spare them. The story begins as Dr. Aziz tumbles off his bicycle and cries, "Hamidullah, Hamidullah! am I late?"

" 'Do not apologize,' said his host. 'You are always late.' "

Unpunctual, inconstant, quarrelsome, careless of filth, lacking initiative: thus does Forster reveal the Indian character; most amusingly, perhaps, in the contest over the paper tower that the Mohammedans carry at the festival of Mohurram. The tower is too tall to pass under a pekul tree, sacred to the Hindus. "A Mohammedan climbed up the pekul and cut the branch off, the Hindus protested, there was a religious riot, and Heaven knew what, with perhaps the troops sent for. . . . Should the procession take another route, or should the towers be shorter? The Mohammedans offered the former, the Hindus insisted on the latter. The Collector had favoured the Hindus, until he suspected that they had artificially bent the tree nearer the ground."

Whether or not the incident proves that the British must stay, they are always given their due. It is the sentimentality of India that they combat, the lack of judicial principle. Speaking through the characters, Forster says all that can be said in defense of the British Raj; and his breadth of view appears also in the action. During the trial of Aziz, which the British are about to take charge of, Ronny applauds the Indian magistrate when he puts them in their place. Most important, there are the English characters who side against their own race: Mrs. Moore, who understands the fatal English lack of kindness and good will; Adela; and Fielding, who works for the acquittal of Aziz.

Thus without suppressing any of the complexities in the relations of the two races, Forster widens our understanding of the whole problem. The Indians have his respect because, if sentimental, at least they do not suffer like the English from the great weakness of "the undeveloped heart." When Mrs. Moore rebukes her son, he tells her that the British are in India not to behave pleasantly, but to do justice and keep the peace. " 'Your sentiments are those of a god,' she said

quietly. . . . Trying to recover his temper, he said, 'India likes gods.' 'And Englishmen like posing as gods.' "

In short, the reader believes in these people, whether or not he has been in India. But how is it with Miss Lillian Smith's two races, the whites and the Negroes of Maxwell, Georgia, who struggle to get free of each other in the pages of *Strange Fruit*? The two main characters, Tracy Deen and his mistress, the rich-egg-shell-colored Nonnie Anderson, are representative of Miss Smith's method. Tracy has nothing to recommend him save his attachment to Nonnie; she is faultless—except for her unchastity, which is romanticized and justified by the code of segregation. A college graduate, she is educated, intelligent, sensitive, and thus typical of one group of the Negro characters in the foreground of the novel. The other group, though illiterate, are honest, hard-working, and usually wise with an earthy wisdom (Tillie, Mamie, Jack). There are, to be sure, Henry and Dessie; but the fact that Henry gets lynched puts him beyond reach of our blame or allowances, and the treatment of Dessie, who seems to be sprung from Miss Margaret Mitchell's Prissy ("Miss Scarlett, Ah doan know nuthin' 'bout bringin' babies"), is so lachrymose as to blur any clear judgment of her.

The white characters, as might be expected from Miss Smith's approach to the Negroes, are either vicious or little better than half-witted, and often both. Tom Harris is the best of them, for he attempts to foil the lynching mob; yet even he in pride of race keeps the Negro doctor waiting while the clock, with characteristic triteness, "ticks away minute after minute after minute of a black man's chance to live." Miss Smith paints in black and white, the whites black and the blacks white.

The point is not that the picture is untrue to the people of Maxwell, Georgia, or any other Southern town, but that a critic on Mars could tell that there never were and never will be two such races. Aside from the tension between Tracy's mother and sister, which seems quite extraneous to the main plot, the characters live only for the race problem, some to solve it and the rest to aggravate it.

Such are the uses of propaganda. Would an intelligent propagandist admire *Strange Fruit*, I wonder? Friends of the Negro sigh at its being suppressed in Boston, without making clear what has been lost. Elsewhere outside the South, whites are presumably confirmed in their self-righteousness by reading it, and Negroes made angrier

than ever. What good that does would be hard to say. Southern whites are scarcely going to be moved by so distorted a reflection of themselves. A sociologist would complain that the racial question cannot be understood until it has been placed more firmly in its context, the civil war within the white race, than Miss Smith attempts to do.

But I do not want to judge any novel as reporting or sociology. If Miss Smith's Negroes had the defects of Forster's Indians and her whites the virtues of his Englishmen, if *Strange Fruit* had its Fielding or Mrs. Moore (Miss Smith herself lives in Georgia), if she had widened her lens to view the racial conflict as only one of the shadows in a sad chiaroscuro—any of these might have provided the "resistance" that literature must have to hold sentimentality at bay. And there are other means, as when Forster, through Mrs. Moore and Professor Godbole and the "naked Indian god" at the trial, makes the struggle seem puny in the eye of Heaven. Whatever the means, *A Passage to India* at twenty is as full of life as ever. But the worm of sentimentality in *Strange Fruit* has corrupted its style, and twenty years from now it will probably taste as musty as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It has not irony enough to keep it sweet.

THE STATE OF LETTERS

N EARLY ten years ago I wrote at the request of the editors of *THE SOUTHERN REVIEW* a paper, "The Function of the Critical Quarterly," which I mention here only to say that nobody, including myself, would want to read it now. Simply to recall its title is to be reminded of the difference between an ideal program for a quarterly review (easy to come by if one has no responsibility for it) and the harder task of trying to see a "policy" in what people are actually writing. Some magazines are better than their editors, others worse; still others are neither better nor worse, and some of these ought not to be published; but I am sure that all literary magazines which do not see the public chiefly as a market and which follow, as well as lead, the good writer, turn out to be different from anything their editors try to make them. One difference may arise from the unexpected sympathies which the editor detects in himself from day to day; another, in the ideal of impartiality which in time may seize upon the least tolerant of minds. I do not confess to that degree of intolerance; I only think it proper to point out that few persons can write independently for twenty years without developing strong biases. By such surprises, then, an editor must expect to have his views, even his sensibility, altered, and perhaps to suffer a few major conversions. Yet I do not think that excessive sympathy with our respect for the tawdry and the confused, provided it is "vital," and for the well-disposed and undistinguished, provided it is "American" (or "Southern"), ought seriously to embarrass the editing of *THE SEWANEE REVIEW*.

A more serious difficulty lies in the mediation between good writing which has not yet got on the New York market (some of it does get there) and an audience which is not only small but scattered and, without high-pressure advertising, hard to reach. Apart from libraries, the audience for magazines like *THE SEWA-*

NEE REVIEW is largely made up of writers, and it will not increase until there is enough money for enough advertising to tell more people that such magazines are available (and not unreadable) to persons over twenty-one who wish to keep up their education. For although the University of the South is handsomely supporting this Review, no university can afford to advertise its publications, even if propriety permitted it, because it would either lose its investment or achieve a financial success, either result being, from the university point of view, intolerable. Since World War I the only American literary magazine (in the tradition in which THE SEWANEE REVIEW will continue) that had a large circulation, was THE DIAL: it had at one time 18,000 monthly, and it was reputed to have lost money. If "conspicuous waste" is the aim of culture under finance capitalism, the quarterly without flattery to party or class is an article too inconspicuous to attract waste.

These observations are not unrelated to the state of letters in the United States today. American literature and criticism have sunk since the war to predictable depths of confusion and vulgarity the menace of which could be matched by the inertia and smugness of the first decade of this century. Everybody knows that from 1900 to 1914 the American writer had to trim to the scale of the genteel, or family, magazine (now the commercial, "quality" monthly), or go to Europe where after long exile, like Ezra Pound he did not know where he was. We may be approaching a similar era today. An observer early in the nineteen-thirties, who was not committed to any of the intellectual or political "programs," right or left, could have foreseen the collapse of American literary standards, once the war came. Our popular critics, who write books about literature which are more popular than the literature written about—such critics as Mr. Van Wyck Brooks and Mr. Bernard De Voto—had begun back in the last decade to undermine the reader's confidence in literary standards. The reader knew little about literary standards but

towards the end of the twenties he had begun to pay them a distant respect, until Mr. Brooks' report on them, the first ever to reach him first-hand, made them out to be a kind of spy-picture conspiracy undertaken by a few advocates of "coterie literature," who were at heart fascists. If you believe in "standards," who is going to uphold them but "authority"? And what other authority is there than the authority of force? So Mr. Brooks called for "primary literature" (great masters) to offset "coterie literature" (aesthetes and pessimists), and would have nothing this side of Shakespeare and Tolstoy. Mr. De Voto has brought his part of the argument to its climax by calling for no literature at all. He prefers, in his latest book, scientific research.¹

This is not the occasion to discuss the origins of fascism, or to guess the meaning of the violent, sentimental "choices" that democrats like Mr. De Voto like to make. It is my impression that in the late fascist countries a "choice" was made, and that upholders of intellectual authority had to be liquidated to make way for "authority" of another kind; and I suspect that many American anti-fascists give their case away to fascism in their loss of insight into the meaning of authority other than that of force. I do not know how much influence Mr. Carl Sandburg has: on October 23, 1940, at a Herald-Tribune Forum in New York, he made a statement which was little noticed, being doubtless an easy echo of what it was popular to believe in a time of hysteria. Mr. Sandburg said:

If you wish to pray or if you wish to sit in silent meditation in a corner . . . you will get it from this poet [T. S. Eliot]. But if you want clarity on human issues he's out—he's zero. *A year ago I would have kept silent about him.* . . . Now I have to say that T. S. Eliot is anti-democratic and that he is mediævalist, and that he is royalist and that he's so close

¹See Mr. Arthur Mizener's review of *The Literary Fallacy* in this issue of THE SEWANEE REVIEW.

to fascists that I am off him, to use a truck drivers' phrase; and we've got to consider the truck-drivers in the present hour rather than the intellectuals.

Why could Mr. Sandburg not have made his particular brand of violent choice a year earlier? Why can't we have both the truck-driver and the intellectual?

At best the views of these men have headed towards a literary nationalism, a semi-political piety under the slogan "primary literature," which may outlast the war and survive as the popular and official attitude towards literary standards; only for this reason do they need to be taken seriously. But still another contribution to the present confusion of American letters came from a direction in which Mr. Brooks, ten years ago, was not visible. I allude to the once powerful school of Marxist critics, whose disappearance ought to be celebrated in a *ballade* constructed on the *ubi sunt* formula: *Mais où sont les Marxistes d'antan?* Having done much to disorganize an entire generation, which might otherwise have been prepared to carry American literature through the apathetic crisis of the war, the Stalinist wing of this school is now talking very much like Mr. De Voto about democracy and nationalism, the wonderful union of which will probably become the religion of the next age. I say this largely to reassure those of my readers who a few years ago liked to think that I was not only un-democratic but anti-democratic; I should not wish, on this of all occasions, to disappoint them. I am not a democrat if Mr. Bernard De Voto is a democrat; but then I do not think that Mr. De Voto is a democrat; I think he is a literary obscurantist. Critics of this kidney are likely to be for any successful political movement, if it can be called "liberal" and if they are "in on it." As Mr. Auden points out in this issue of THE SEWANEE REVIEW, fascism in Europe came out of a liberalized society. THE SEWANEE REVIEW will oppose, when it is necessary for a literary review to consider politics, the democratic or any

other state, if like the fascist state it shall make an all-engrossing demand for our loyalty and shall thus become the national religion. Then, regardless of what the state may call itself, it will be totalitarian.

The great literary movement which enlisted the largest minds and the best talents of America and Europe in the first three decades of this century has come to an end: the neo-symbolist movement gave us Joyce and Proust (who "caused the fall of France") and with few exceptions the best poets of all countries, and produced for the first time in America a genuine literature. For the first time we had not merely a few great talents surrounded by that kind of provincialism which denies the true provincialism in the assertion of national complacency. What will follow in the post-war era nobody can know. The American genius, even its "regional" expression, after World War I was fertilized by Europe in an exchange in which a good deal of American influence came back to us. From about 1900 to 1925 the European novel and much of the poetry felt the impact of American writers: Henry James, Stephen Crane, Eliot; with Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, and Whitman back of them. From the time of Poe the best American writers (and some others, like Mrs. Stowe and Jack London) made their own way abroad without benefit of government aid. Will this happen again? Possibly; but the natural process of non-political communication will have to compete with the official "cultural activities" (in which I myself have participated in the past three years) that tell foreigners what we want them to think of us. I am certain that there has been no calculated effort to whitewash American life; there has been merely a large exportation of "social-minded" writing, with the result that our neighbors to the south of us, while they are reading a good writer of this sort, like Dos Passos, will at the same time inevitably think that we believe the late

Stephen Vincent Benét (an amiable and talented man) to be a great poet; and they will hear of Léonie Adams (who doesn't tell anybody what to think about America) only, if at all, after many years. For when we deliberately undertake to export America we have got to feel a cause in it, and we succeed in sending out "representative" writers, good and bad (the good to the bad in a ratio of about one to five), who after the social changes of ten years will cease to represent anything more than an historical document, unless, being also good writers, they merely represent literature.

Will our official participation in the arts encourage and even create an official literature? The entire question is open: whatever the new literature turns out to be it will be the privilege of *THE SEWANEE REVIEW* to print its share of it, to comment on it, and to try to understand it.

This process of discovery may lead to a revision of certain views expressed or implied here: it may be that a political religion can tolerate first-rate talent by ignoring it, and that we shall not get a merely official literature—by which I mean a literature not officially censored but spontaneously conforming to official beliefs, morally dead and quite sinister. The Russian novel of the nineteenth century would have been different but not necessarily better without the restraints of the Tsarist censorship. I am not defending the idea of censorship or any special case of it; I am trying to make a distinction between censorship and that "freedom" which is free only to conform because it is empty. We must contemplate the possibility in the next generation of a society here as well as in Europe so precarious in its footing that men may come, for a time, to believe what they are told to believe: imaginative literature as we still know it may go underground or temporarily disappear. These are not predictions but possibilities. Yet religious and moral decadence in the past has

not always brought down with it the humane imagination. There is no reason to suppose that a few people will not always have the insights that have kept man alive. That—to keep alive the imagination and what it has meant historically—is perhaps a good enough cause for a quarterly like THE SEWANEE REVIEW to do what little it can to support.

The title of this article will be a regular feature of THE SEWANEE REVIEW, to be used by the Editor or by another writer upon invitation.

A. T.

